PETER

A CAT O' ONE TAIL

HIS LIFE AND ADVENTURES

ILLUSTRATED BY

LOUIS WAIN

(PETER'S PROPRIETOR)

WRITTEN BY

CHARLES MORLEY

(A PAL OF PETER'S)

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK
27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

LONDON
24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

The Knickerbocker Press

1892

PETER

A CAT O' ONE TAIL

HIS LIFE AND ADVENTURES

ILLUSTRATED BY

LOUIS WAIN

(PETER'S PROPRIETOR)

WRITTEN BY

CHARLES MORLEY

(A PAL OF PETER'S)

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK
27 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

LONDON
24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

The Knickerbocker Press

1892

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

Introduces the reader to the night of the great storm, and to the family circle. Peter is born. His grandfather, Lear, and his mother, Cordelia. The coffin in the fire, and the fidelity of Ann, who turned executioner . . 1

CHAPTER II.

The household settles down into its usual routine. The kittens open their eyes. I choose the chubby one. How the crowing of the cock affected the christening. We call him Peter as a warning to fibbers 9

CHAPTER III.

Peter's young days. A word about his father and mother. Peter's home amongst the curios; the black hole behind the skeleton's foot. Peter's first mouse. The linnet and the canary. Peter cries for the moon 9

CHAPTER IV.

Peter is instructed in deportment, and learns to read, to talk, and to say his prayers. He shows a commendable thirst for knowledge, and really becomes a most accomplished member of society. A word on mewing, or cats' language 13

CHAPTER V.

London being very hot Peter and I leave for the country. Peter enjoys the change, and revels in country sights and sounds; he goes out fishing with Jack. We proceed to the seaside, but Peter shows no liking for the ocean . 19

CHAPTER VI.

Concerns the queer old lady in the poke bonnet and her nine cats. Poison! Was it revenge? Peter goes astray and I advertise for him. Many cats call, but none are chosen. At last! 24

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

Peter in lodgings. Mrs. Nagsby and the euphonium. Sarah's base accusations against Peter. King Arthur the greyhound, and his adventure with Mrs. Nagsby's lady lodger. Peter steals Mrs. Nagsby's teeth, and the consequences 32

CHAPTER VIII.

Life in Excelsior Mansions. The old graveyard and Peter's favorite tombstone. Concerning Deadman's Passage. The verger's story of the man who came to a violent end because he would have a fine coffin. Peter is lost. The flash of light on the window-blind 40

CHAPTER IX.

I dream horrible dreams, and make inquiries respecting Peter. A friendly postman puts me on the scent, and takes me to see a famous Professor who works a cat-and-dog show 49

CHAPTER X.

Night in Smith's Row. Introduces the human fly and the lion-maned lady, who perform some staggering feats. The Professor owns that he has just bought an educated cat, and invites me to call and see him 53

CHAPTER XI.

I call upon the Professor and once more encounter the human fly and the lion-maned lady. The Professor and the mermaid. The performing cats and the flashes of fire. The midnight vision explained in a very simple way. I stop and dine with the Professor 58

CHAPTER XII.

An interlude which deals with a bull-dog with glass eyes and cruel teeth. The dog's remarkable history and his lamentable end 63

CHAPTER XIII.

I go with the Professor on a Sunday excursion to the East End. The bird market. Mr. Chaffinch, the dog- and bird-fancier. I am introduced to the purveyor of cats' meat to the Royal Family, who is inclined to be haughty; and also make the acquaintance of Miss Tew and the white mice 69

CHAPTER XIV.

The purveyor of cats' meat to the Royal Family. How he "loored" Peter away from the bosom of his family. Mr. Chaffinch on coincidences, followed by Mr. Chaffinch's story of the parrot which appealed to the Archbishop, and was the means of restoring a missing husband to his wife and family 78

CHAPTER XV.

PAGE

Showing how Peter paid his addresses to Miss Badroulbadour, a certain Persian cat. The course of true love runs as usual. A scratch in time saves nine. Pleasures of the country. Peter and the bees 84

CHAPTER XVI.

London after a visit to the country. Peter is glad to get back to town, but turns up his nose at the Cockney sun. Reflections on London roofs. Peter goes to his club, and the chapter necessarily closes 90

CHAPTER XVII.

A few words on gratitude. Peter always a grateful animal. Shows also how he objected to kittens 94

CHAPTER XVIII.

Peter goes to a hotel, and pays his ten shillings a day. He flirts with the chambermaids, and makes journeys in the elevator. The alarm of fire. Peter in disgrace, and Peter's liver 97

CHAPTER XIX.

Peter, indulging too freely in the pleasures of the table, is taken to see the doctor. The strange crowd at the doctor's door. The poor little girl, and the cat that lived upon mice 101

CHAPTER XX.

Peter in his old age. The frivolous Polly Winkles. The circle in the sitting-room. Peter says his prayers and goes to bed 106

PETER: A CAT O' ONE TAIL.

CHAPTER I.

Introduces the reader to the night of the great storm, and to the family circle. Peter is born. His grandfather, Lear, and his mother, Cordelia. The coffin in the fire, and the fidelity of Ann, who turned executioner.

PETER, the admirable cat whose brief history I am about to relate, appeared in the world on a terrible winter's night. A fierce snow-storm was raging, the sleet was driving at a terrific rate through the air, and the streets were banked up with snow-drifts. All traffic had been stopped, the roar of London was hushed, and every one who had the merest pretence of a fireside sought it on this memorable occasion. Even the shivering outcasts disappeared from the streets, and hid themselves in the holes which they called homes, knowing that Charity, when it was most needed, had gone to bed. It was a wild night in the city, a wild night in the country, a wild night at sea, and certainly a most unpropitious night for the birth of a cat, an animal which is always associated with home and hearth. The fact remains that Peter was born on the night of one of the most terrible storms on record.

Within was a picture of comfort, our pleasure in which was greatly enhanced by the howling of the storm without.

The thick curtains were drawn across the window, the lamps were lighted, and a bright fire burnt clearly over a clean-swept hearth. A fitful illumination was cast on the pictures, and a pleasant glow lightened up the old oak cabinet, in which were stored some bits of china, a Japanese idol, a few fierce-looking knives richly chased, an ivory elephant yellow with age, and the model of the ship, sailing on an ocean of canvas waves, in which my poor father, whose bones are now coral in the Pacific, made his first voyage. Our chairs were drawn up to the fire, the tea-things were on the table, and my mother was just about to try the strength of the brew, when Ann Tibbits, our faithful and well-tried maid-of-all-work, bounced into the room, without knocking at the door. Her cap was all awry, her hair was dishevelled, and she gasped for breath as she addressed herself to my mother thus, in spasms:

"Please — ma'am — the cat 's—kittened—in—your—bonnet!"

Such a breach of discipline had never been known before in our prim household, where there was a place for everything, and everything had a place.

My mother pushed her spectacles on to her forehead, and, looking severely at Ann, said: "*Which* one, Ann? My summer bonnet, or—my winter bonnet?"

"The one with the fur lining, ma'am."

"And a most comfortable bonnet to kitten in, I 'm sure!" replied my mother sarcastically, as much as to say that she wished all cats had such a choice under the circumstances. "Another cat would have chosen the one with the lace and the violets, out of sheer perverseness.

But there—I *knew* I could depend on a cat which had been trained in *my* house."

My mother poured out a cup of tea, betraying no agitation as she dropped two lumps of sugar into the cup —her customary allowance—and helped herself to cream. In a minute or two, however, she took up her knitting, and I noticed that two stitches in succession were dropped, a sure sign that she was perturbed in spirit. Suddenly my mother turned her eyes to the fire, and exclaimed: "Why, my dears, there 's a *coffin*, as sure as I am a sinful woman. *A death in the family!*" and she sighed sadly, and again took up her knitting.

"Ah! To be sure! I had forgotten. Of course it is Cordelia." And a smile took the place of the frown which had gathered on my mother's wrinkled forehead. I should have mentioned that our cat was called Cordelia because she was the daughter of Lear, who had received that name in consequence of a peculiar expression, akin to that of laughing, which sometimes stole over his face. I am unable to confirm this report, as Lear departed this life long ago, and is at this moment buried beneath his favorite apple tree at the end of the garden. So far as I remember him, he had but one ear, he had lost one of his eyes in battle, and the latter portion of his tail had been cut off in some youthful escapade. He died a violent death, being vanquished after a terrible battle by a rival Tom, called the Templar, from his Nightly adventures.

"Why, of course it is Cordelia," exclaimed my mother, referring to the appearance of the coffin in the fire. "*How many*, Ann?" she continued, addressing our faithful servant, who still remained standing at the table awaiting her orders.

"Seven, ma'am."

"*Seven!*" cried my mother. "Seven—it 's outrageous. Why, my bonnet would n't hold 'em!"

"Three in the bonnet, ma'am, and two in your new m–u–f–f!"

"My new muff!" cried my mother. "I *knew* you were keeping something back." And the stitches dropped fast and furious. "That 's only *five*, Ann," she continued, looking up from her work. "Where are the other two? I insist upon knowing."

"In the Alaska tail boa, ma'am," responded Ann, timidly.

Slowly my mother's wrath evaporated, and her features settled down to their ordinary aspect of composure.

"Well," she said, "it might have been worse. She might have kittened in my silk dress. But there—it is evident that something must be done. I 'm a kind woman, I hope, but I 'm not going to be responsible for seven young and tender kittens. Ann Tibbits, England expects every woman to do her duty!"

"*All?*" asked Ann.

"*Four*," rèplied my mother.

"Now?" asked Ann.

"The sooner the better," said my mother.

At this moment a sudden blast shook every window in the house, which seemed to be in momentary danger of a total collapse.

"Not fit to turn a dog out," murmured my mother. "Not fit to turn a dog out. Ugh! how cold it is, and here am I condemning to death four poor little kittens on a night like this—to snatch them away from their warm mother, my muff, and Alaska tail, and dip them in a bucket of ice-cold water. And yet they must go; but, Ann, I 've an idea—WARM the water. They shall leave the world comfortably. They 'll never know it."

Thus, alas! do most of us shut our eyes to the tragedies of life. It is more comfortable.

* * * * * * * * *

The faithful, unemotional Ann carried out her instructions, and thus was the strange appearance of the coffin which my mother saw in the fire explained. Peter was one of the three kittens which were born in my mother's fur-lined bonnet, and the white marks on his body always remind me of the terrible snow-storm in the midst of which he sounded his first mew.

CHAPTER II.

The household settles down into its usual routine. The kittens open their eyes. I choose the chubby one. How the crowing of the cock affected the christening. We call him Peter as a warning to fibbers.

You will kindly imagine that several weeks have elapsed since the night of the great storm. The liberty which our cat Cordelia had taken with my mother's finery was forgotten, and the household had settled down into its usual humdrum routine. Tibbits had made the new arrivals a bed in the little box-room, and the doctor declared that Mrs. Cordelia was doing as well as could be expected. Every morning we had asked the usual question: "How is Cordelia?" "Quite well, thank you." "And the kittens?" "Also quite well." In due course Ann brought the welcome news that the three kittens had opened their eyes, and the kid glove was at once detached from the knocker of the front door. It was on the morning after they had obtained their blessed sight that I was invited by Tibbits to go down-

stairs and take my choice. I went down, but I could see nothing of the kittens; there was only Cor-

delia, with tail twisting, eyes aflame, and whiskers bristling, wheeling round and round a number of straw cases in which champagne had once been packed. Lo! one of the cases began to walk like the woods of Birnam. The movement caught Cordelia's eye, and she knocked it over with her paw. A fluffy, chubby kitten, consisting of a black body with a patch of white on it, was revealed. The little one so captivated my fancy that I put him in my pocket, and without more ado took him up-stairs, and publicly announced my determination to claim him as my property.

"What shall we name it?" asked my mother.

"Fiz," said one, alluding to the empty champagne cases, —a suggestion which was at once overruled, as we were a temperate family and little given to sparkling liquids. "Pop" was also voted against, not only as being vulgar, but as going to the other extreme, and leading people to suppose that we were extensively addicted to ginger-beer.

"I think, my dears, as Peter was born on a——" My mother's speech was interrupted by an exultant "Cock-a-doodle-do."

"That horried fowl again!" exclaimed my mother.

The cock in question was the property of a neighbor, and was a most annoying bird. Even my kitten was disturbed by the defiant note. "*M-e-w?*" said he, in a meek interrogative, as much as to say, "What *is* that dreadful noise?"

"Cock-a-doodle-do," cried the bird again. "Mew," replied the kitten, this time with a note of anger in his voice. "COCK-A-DOODLE," screamed the bird, evidently in a violent temper. "Mew," said the kitten again, in a tone of remonstrance. The remaining syllable of his war-cry and the kitten's reply were cut short by my mother, who put her fingers to her ears, and said:

"And the cock crowed thrice. My dears, I have it!"

"What, mother?"

"We 'll call him PETER."

"Peter Gray?"
"Peter Simple?"
"Peter the Great?" } cried the family.

"No," replied my mother, with a humorous twinkle, "Peter the Apostle," pointing to the Family Bible, which was always kept on a little occasional table in a corner of the sitting-room. "And let Peter be a living warning against fibbing, my dears, whether on a small scale or a large one."

A bowl of water was then placed on the table, and, having sprinkled a shower upon his devoted back, I, as his proprietor, looking at him closely, cried:

"Arise, Peter; obey thy master."

In the middle of my exhortations, however, Cordelia jumped on the table, took little Peter by the scruff of his neck, and carried him back to the nursery.

CHAPTER III.

Peter's young days. A word about his father and mother. Peter's home amongst the curios; the black hole behind the skeleton's foot. Peter's first mouse. The linnet and the canary. Peter cries for the moon.

THE day came when I put Peter into the pocket of my overcoat, and took him away to his new home. I had the greatest confidence in him, being a firm believer in the doctrine of heredity. His father I never knew, but his grandfather, as I have said, bore a great reputation for courage, as was indicated on his tombstone, the inscription on which ran as follows:

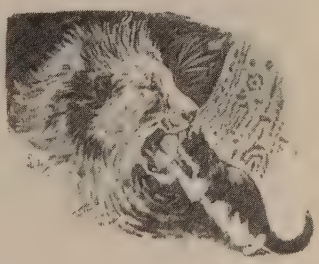
Here lies LEAR. Aged about 8 years. A Tom Cat killed in single combat with Tom the Templar whilst defending his hearth and home. England expects every cat to do his duty.

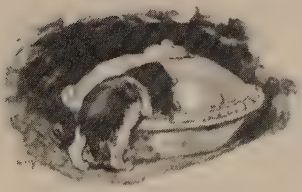
His mother Cordelia was of an affectionate nature, caring little for the chase, indifferent to birds (except sparrows), temperate in the matter of fish, timid of dogs, a kind mother, and had never been known to scratch a child. I believed then that there was every possibility of Peter's inheriting the

admirable qualities of his relatives. The world into which he was introduced contained a large assortment of curios which I had bought in many a salesroom, such as bits of old oak, bits of armor, bits of china, bits of tapestry, and innumerable odds and ends which had taken my fancy. Picture, then, Peter drinking his milk from a Crown Derby dish which I had placed in a corner between the toes of a gentleman skeleton whom Time had stained a tobacco brown. The Crown Derby dish and the skeleton were, like the rest of my furniture, "bargains." At this period of his life Peter resembled a series of irregular circles, such as a geometrician might have made in an absent moment: two round eyes, one round head, and one round body. I regarded him much as a young mother would her first baby, for he was my first pet. I watched him lest he should get into danger; I conversed with him in a strange jargon, which I called cats' language; I played with him constantly, and introduced him to a black hole behind the skeleton's left heel, which was supposed to be the home of mice. He kept a close watch on the black hole, and one day, which is never to be forgotten, he caught his first mouse. It was a very little one, but it clung to Peter's nose and made it bleed. Regardless of the pain, Peter marched up to me, tail in air, and laid the half-dead mouse at my feet, with a look in his eyes which said plainly enough, "Shades of Cæsar! I claim a Triumph, Master."

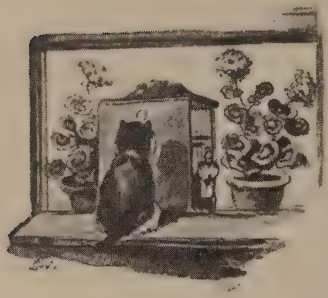
He returned to the black hole again, and mewed

piteously for more. Peter was very green, as you will understand, but he soon discovered that mewing kept the mice away, and having taken the lesson to heart, preserved silence for the future. The mouse-hunts occupied but a small portion of Peter's time. He was full of queer pranks, which youth and high spirits suggested to him. He took a delight in tumbling down the stairs; he hid himself in the mouth of a lion whose head was one of my chief treasures; he tilted against a dragon candlestick like a young St. George; he burnt his budding whiskers in an attempt to discover the source of the flame in the wick of the candle. He became, too, a great connoisseur of vases, ornaments, and pictures, sitting before them and examining them for an hour at a time. He was also very much given to voyages of discovery, dark continents having a peculiar fascination for him. Even the lion's mouth had no terror for him. I once produced him from the interior of a brand-new top hat like a conjurer an omelette. Again, we were very much surprised at breakfast one morning to see Peter walk out of a rabbit-pie in which he had secreted himself. I used to let my canary fly about the room, and Peter chased him. The canary flew to an old helmet on a shelf, and thus baffled Peter. The canary seemed to know this, for when Peter was in the room he always flew to the helmet and sang in peace. If

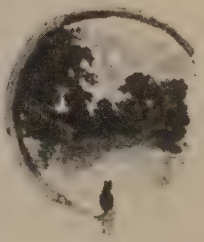




he perched elsewhere there was a chase, but the helmet was a sanctuary. The linnet's cage I placed on the window-sill in sunny weather, and Peter took great interest in him. He could not see the musician, but he heard the music, and tried every means he knew to discover its source. At last he peeped through a little hole at the back of the cage, and when he saw the bird he was quite satisfied, and made no attempt to disturb it.



In the matter of eating and drinking Peter was inclined to vegetarianism, being fond of beet-root and cabbage, but he soon took to carnal habits, always liking his food to be divided into three portions, consisting of greens, potatoes, and meat. In addition to such food as we gave him he by no means despised any delicacies he could discover on his own account. For instance, he cleaned out a pot of glycerine. Having tilted the lid up, he pulled out the pins from a pin-cushion, but was saved in time; he was curious about a powder-box, and came mewing downstairs a Peter in white; he did not despise the birds out of a hat; he lost his temper when he saw his rival in the looking-glass, and was beside himself with rage when the glass swung round and he saw only a plain board. His most curious experience was his first glimpse of the moon, which he saw from our bit of back garden. He was rooted to the ground with wonder at the amazing sight, and we called him in vain. The only reply was a melancholy, love-stricken mew which went to my heart.



CHAPTER IV.

Peter is instructed in deportment, and learns to read, to talk, and to say his prayers. He shows a commendable thirst for knowledge, and really becomes a most accomplished member of society. A word on mewing, or cats' language.

So Peter rejoiced in the days of his youth, and there was no end to his frolics. But do not think for a moment that his education was neglected, especially in the invaluable matters of manners and deportment, both of which are so essential to advancement in life. How many men have gone to the dogs by the neglect of those all-important qualifications which highly civilized societies demand! How many cats, too, have gone to the dogs, owing to the infringement of the unwritten code which governs well-regulated cat-life! I took every care then that Peter was well instructed in the whole art of etiquette, which is deemed more important than the deepest learning by so many great people. I taught him to sit at table; to enter a room with grace, and to leave it with dignity. Indeed, I spared no trouble, and Peter became as rigorous as a Chesterfield in the proper observance of all such matters.

I can give you no better example of Peter's extensive knowledge of what was right and wrong in the ceremonial side of life than by telling you that when he felt an irrepressible sneeze forming he trotted out of the room and sneezed outside. A D'Orsay seized by sternutatory spasms could have done no more. When Peter played, too, he played gently, and did not disturb his elders by obtrusive attentions. He never required to be told twice to do a thing. Once was enough for Peter. Then again in the matter of breakages he was as virtuous a kitten as ever lived. I had thirty precious blue china vases on my sideboard, and through this fragile maze Peter always wound in and out without moving a vase. His virtues in this respect were well known to my servants, who never accused Peter of breaking the milk-jug, or the cups and saucers, I can assure you. They knew that he was incapable of such acts of iconoclasm. Don't, pray, run away with the impression that Peter was a prig or a paragon. Like the best of human beings, he had his faults, but upon these it would be impertinent to touch more than lightly, though some biographers take a different view of memoir-writing. Peter is still alive, *verbum sap.*

Peter was partial to Fridays, not for devotional reasons, but because Fridays were devoted to cleaning up. If you have ever watched a char-

woman washing the kitchen floor, you will have noticed that she completes one patch before she proceeds with the next, as if she took pride in each patch, regarding it as a picture, and representing the highest example of charring. It was Peter's delight to sit and watch this domestic operation; and no sooner was the charwoman's back turned towards a fresh portion of her territory than Peter ran all over the freshly washed patch and impressed it with the seal of his paws, just as an explorer would indicate a great annexation by a series of flags. That was a mere frolic. It was about this time that I discovered Peter's power as a performing cat. I tied a hare's foot to a piece of string and dangled it before Peter's eyes. I hid the hare's foot in strange places. I flung it down-stairs. I threw it up-stairs. The hare's foot never failed to attract him. We used to roll on the floor together; we played hide-and-seek together. I noticed that he had a habit of lying on his back with his tail out, his head back, and his paws crossed. By degrees I taught him to assume this attitude at the word of command, so that when I said, "Die, Peter!" Peter turned on his back and became rigid until he received permission to live again.

I also taught him to talk in mews at the word of command. I hear some genial critic exclaim that this is mere Munchausenese. I decline to argue with any critic that ever lived, and repeat, fearlessly, and in measured terms, that Peter talked to *me*. Of course he would not drop into conversation with the first person who bade him "good-morning." It is true that no philological treatise

contains a line on mewing, or cat-language, but I assert again that Peter and I held many conversations together by means of the "mew," used with a score of inflections, often delicately shaded, each of which conveyed its meaning to me. This is no place for an essay on cat-language; but for the benefit of future inquirers I may roughly note down a few of the inflections which I have noted down from time to time during my proprietorship of Peter. The mew mercurial he used when in a cheerful mood; the

mew melancholy after a scolding; the mew musical was generally nocturnal; the mew mellow mostly post-prandial, and was coupled with purring; the mew minatory was combined with the mews majestic and malignant, and was used generally in mousing; the mew melodious was often heard in conjunction with music; the mew magnetic had a peculiar ring, and was associated with flirtations; the mew maniacal was a sign of jealousy; the mew magisterial I noticed in Peter's latter days when he controlled a

family of cats and dogs by the mere sound of his voice. This is by no means an exhaustive vocabulary, but it will serve to explain my discovery. I need not add that Peter's tail was as expressive as an orator's arm; but the tail branch of cat-language I must leave for the present.

Peter took to reading, too, quite easily, and sat up with a *pince-nez* on his nose and a paper between his paws. It was, as you may well imagine, a red-letter day with me when Peter said his prayers for the first time; and I was better pleased when he put his little paws up and lifted his eyes up to the ceiling than with any other of his accomplishments, though they were more appreciated by

unthinking friends. It was all very well to place a mouse at my feet and thus play to the gallery, but I felt that Peter's thirst for applause might be his ruin. If you honor me by reading to the end of this biography, you will find that Peter's prayers restored him to his loving friends in a curious way. I mention this fact, though the moral is too obvious to escape even the reader who hops over the pages of a book like a flea over the human *corpus*.

CHAPTER V.

London being very hot Peter and I leave for the country. Peter enjoys the change, and revels in country sights and sounds; he goes out fishing with Jack. We proceed to the seaside, but Peter shows no liking for the ocean.

When the summer came, and the London pavements began to quake with heat, I determined to fly to the country. As delights are doubled when shared with those we care for, I determined to take Peter with me, so I packed him up in a specially constructed travelling saloon of his own, to wit, a flannel-lined basket containing all the necessary comforts for the journey, such as air-holes and feeding-bottles, and off we started in the highest of spirits. Peter found a new world opened to him, which contrasted pleasantly with the sooty gardens and sootier roofs of the metropolis. We were both Cockneys, but the scent-laden air, the stretching landscape, the bosky groves, the old garden, the umbrageous lanes, and the thousand and one beauties of the country, fascinated us both. We were the

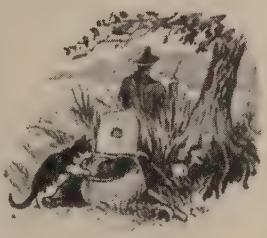
guests of a burly farmer, who lived in a queer old house, half timber and half brick, with low-ceilinged rooms, the whole well seasoned by age. The general living-room was the capacious kitchen, which looked mighty picturesque. Oak panels ran half-way up to the ceiling; the pots and pans were ranged neatly in an open cupboard, pleasantly suggestive of good fare and plenty of it. There were flowers in red pots in the windows, and my bedroom was a picture of coolness and cleanliness.

Amid these pleasant surroundings Peter soon made himself very happy, and became a great friend of a cat called Jack, who took him under his charge and showed him the ways of the country. Jack was a favorite on the farm. He was certainly given to roving, and did not always "come home to tea," as Mr. Toole used to say. As a mouser he had few equals in the countryside, and one evening when we were telling stories by the fireside the farmer told me that Jack had despatched no less than four hundred mice from one hay-rick.

"Munchausen!" I muttered; "Munchausen!"

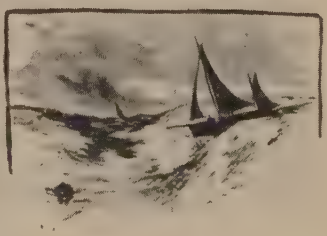
"No 'e doan't munch 'em. He doan't use his teeth. No mouser do," exclaimed the farmer, and I subsided. Jack was a poacher amongst his other accomplishments, and had been brought up by a wicked old black cat, in whose

company he developed strong predatory tendencies. At an early age he began his researches into the anatomy of the cockroach and the blue-bottle; at the same time, however, he developed a wonderful respect for the wasp. Jack was also a disciple of Isaak Walton. He would crouch on a mossy knoll by the edge of the river, and sometimes was successful in capturing a small trout. The farmer was himself a great fisherman. Jack was a study while the preparations were in progress, and, all intent, would follow close at his master's heels. He would crouch among the rushes whilst the tackle was being adjusted, and anxiously scan the water as the fly drifted along the surface. He took a keen delight in the sport, and when a fish was negotiating the bait he always purred loudly in anticipation of the feast in prospect. The trout landed and the line re-cast, he would seize his prey, and with stealthy gait slink off with his prize, leaving the old farmer to discover his loss when he might. Together Jack and Peter roamed over the meadow lands, trampling under foot the kingscap and sorrel, now shaking down the white and yellow butterflies, now levying blackmail on the hedgerow blossoms, from the sweet honeysuckle amid the hawthorn boughs to the tiny stitchwort peeping through the brambly bottoms. The poultry-run, too, was an object of great interest to Jack and Peter, and the cock of the walk only escaped with a damaged comb.



Together they fought the rats, and together they would lie in wait for the thrush and the blackbird,—I am happy to say in vain. The farmer told me that in his youth Jack once took up his residence in the hollow of an old oak, where he lived on the furred and feathered game. At last he returned home. For hours he wandered about the precincts of his old home, fearful of discovery, now crouching amongst the flower-beds, and now flying in terror at the sound of the hall clock, At last he ventured into the kitchen, entering by the window and creeping to the kitchen hearth, where he dozed off to the music of the cricket, to be welcomed like another Prodigal Son.

Alas! these delights were cut short, for Peter and I were soon compelled to pack up our traps and proceed to the seaside for professional purposes. Peter was not fond of the sea. When I took him out yachting he was compelled to call for the steward; and one day when exploring the rocks at low water, gazing with rapture at his own charming face as it was reflected in the glassy surface of a deep pool, an inquiring young lobster nipped his tail, and the shore rang with piteous calls for help. Peter, although a Briton, has never cared for the sea since then, and so deeply was the



disaster impressed upon him that I have known him reject a choice bit of meat which happened to have a few grains of salt on it. It wafted him back to the ocean, the lobster, and the steward. What powers of imagination were Peter's!

CHAPTER VI.

Concerns the queer old lady in the poke bonnet and her nine cats. Poison! Was it revenge? Peter goes astray and I advertise for him. Many cats call, but none are chosen. At last!

As these memoirs cover a period of seven or eight years, and as space is limited, my readers will kindly consent to take a seat on the convenient carpet of the magician, and be wafted gently to the next station on the road without further question. This is a pleasant byway in suburban London, greatly frequented by organ-grinders, travelling bears, German bands, and peripatetic white mice. This road is always associated in my mind with the mysterious disappearance of Peter. We had often laughed at the odd old lady who lived two doors higher up, for the anxiety which she displayed when any of her pets were missing. It was our turn now.

This same old lady was very fond of her cats, and had nine of them at the time I am writing of. Every morning when the weather was warm, she and her cats would come out and unconsciously form a succession of tableaux for our amusement. A rug was spread out under the pear-tree in the middle of the tiny lawn, a great basket-chair was placed in the middle of this rug, and, these preparations having been made, the old lady, who was very stout, and always wore a monster poke bonnet and a shapeless

black silk dress, came out, followed by her nine cats, and took possession of the basket-chair. A little maid then appeared with a tray, on which were nine little blue china saucers and a jug of milk. The nine little saucers were ranged in a semicircle, and filled with milk, whereupon the old lady cried out, "Who says breakfast, dearies? Who says breakfast—breakfast?" This invitation was immediately responded to by the nine cats. When they had done the old lady cried, "Who says washee, dearies?

Washee, washee, washee?" Whereupon the nine cats sat on their haunches and proceeded to make their toilettes. The requirements of cleanliness having been satisfied, and the nine basins having been taken away by the little maid, the old lady shouted out, "Who says play, dearies? Playee, playee, playee?" holding out her arms, and calling out, "Dido Dums, Dido Dums, come here, deary," when a fine Persian cat jumped on to her right shoulder. "Now Diddles Doddles, Diddles Doddles," and another Persian cat jumped on to her left shoulder.

"Tootsy Wootsy," she called once more, and a black cat scrambled up to the crown of the poke bonnet. And one by one they were summoned by some endearing diminutive, until the nine cats had taken possession of every possible coign of vantage which was offered by the old lady's capacious person. There they sat, waving their tails to and fro, evidently very pleased by their mistress' little attentions. Mrs. Mee was not very popular in the neighborhood, except with the milkman and the butcher. The cats'-meat-man indeed, who supplied various families in our road, positively hated her—so I gathered from our servant,—and had been heard to say *sotto voce* in unguarded moments, "Ha! ha! I 'll be revenged." It was not unnatural, as the cats were fed on mutton cutlets and fresh milk, and cats' meat was at a discount. About three weeks before Peter disappeared, Mrs. Mee, in the short space of three or four days, had lost no less than five cats by a violent death, and five little graves had been dug, marked by five little tombstones, and the five dead cats had been laid in their last resting-places by the hands of the old lady herself. A funeral is not generally amusing, but I could not restrain a smile when I saw my eccentric old neighbor follow the remains of her dead pets, which were reverently carried on the tea-tray by the little serving-maid, the old lady herself leading the way, ringing a muffled peal with the dinner-bell, the remaining cats bringing up the rear, pondering over the fate of their dead comrades.

It happened that three of these unfortunate victims had been found on my doorstep in mortal throes, and on the first occasion I was absolutely horrified by the appearance of a little boy at my door one evening, who without any preface or ceremony cried out: "Please shall I take 'im to the chemist's and finish 'im orf." "Good gracious, boy! Finish *who* off?" "Why, the cat, sir. Can't you see her

a-writhin'?—oo crikey!" I shut my eyes and gave the boy sixpence for a dose of prussic acid, and bade him run as hard as he could. There was quite an epidemic amongst the cats at this time, and whether they were found in my front garden or some one's else, the boys insisted upon coming to inform me of the discovery, and never failed to add, "Please, sir, shall I take 'im to the chemist's and finish 'im orf?" My donation of sixpence for prussic acid had leaked out amongst the boys of the neighborhood, and I began to tremble at the very sound of the bell. One boy in particular I feel sure will come to a bad end. Twice he had called at unearthly hours with dying cats in his arms; twice had I given him sixpences to take them to the chemist's and "finish 'em orf." He came a third time, and losing all patience with the tormentor, I bade him depart under pain of calling the police. "Keep yer 'air on, guv'nor," he replied. "Keep yer 'air on. I thought yer 'ad a 'art You ain't a 'art, or you would n't see a poor creature a-sufferin' like this, and all for want of a drop o' pison. Well, see 'ere, guv'nor, shall I *cut 'is froat, or 'ang 'im?*" I gave the little wretch his sixpence, but you may feel sure I felt very angry with the old lady, who blamed me for the destruction of her pets, adducing the fact that they were found dying on my doorsteps as proof conclusive. One morning I received an anonymous post-card. Although it bore the Charing Cross post-mark I felt sure it came from the old lady. It read as follows:

"The Assirian came down like a wolf on the fold."

This was the last straw, for I felt that as regards the old lady's cats I had behaved in a sympathetic and neighborly spirit. I remember this post-card because the same afternoon that it came Peter disappeared, and I began to fear that he had yielded to the temptation of a poisoned trotter which had been found in my garden

stripped of its flesh. This vulgar dish was a delicacy which Peter had never been able to resist, though why he should have preferred it to the choice foods that were daily piled upon his plate I cannot for the life of me say. Cats are not unlike men. Was it not the Marquis of Steyne who sometimes preferred turnips and boiled mutton to the finest dish in the world? We searched the neighborhood in vain, and at last I determined to advertise. Accordingly I addressed an advertisement to my favorite paper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, requesting them to give it a prominent place in the Agony Column. I received a polite letter by return of post, saying that that paper did not possess such a dreadful column as I had indicated. The paper would, however, have much pleasure in inserting as many agonies as I chose to pay for, and it soon appeared in all the glory of Brevier, so called, I suppose, because you get so little for your money. It ran as follows:

"COME BACK, PETER. Lost, stolen, strayed, or poisoned, a white and black cat called Peter, who left his friends at ——— on Monday afternoon last. Round his neck he wore a blue ribbon, with the word PETER embroidered upon it in red silk. Before retiring to rest he always says his prayers. Dead or alive, a reward of Two Pounds is offered to any one who will restore him to his mourning friends."

I little knew what I was bringing on my devoted head. I had been troubled enough before with dying cats, but now they were all alive. Cats were brought to me in baskets, in boxes, in arms; Manx cats and cats whose tails were missing for other than hereditary reasons; lame cats, blind cats, cats with one eye, and cats who squinted. Never before had I seen such an extraordinary collection. My whole time was now taken up in interviewing callers

with cats. If the boys were bad before, they were a thousand times worse now. Here is one example out of a score. He was a boy known as Pop, who carried the laundry baskets.

"'Ave yer found yer cat yet?"

"No, we have n't."

"Did yer say it was a yaller 'un?"

"No, I did n't."

"What did I say, Hop?" continued Pop, triumphantly turning to a one-legged friend who swept a crossing close by.

"Yer said, Pop, as it was a tortus," murmured the bashful Hop, who had sheltered himself behind Pop.

"A tortus, that 's it. A tortus, and Hop and *I 's* found it, sir. We 've got it here."

"You 're wrong. My cat 's *not* a tortoise," I replied.

"Bless you, we know that, guv'nor. Just as if we did n't know Peter! Ah! Peter was a cat as wants a lot of replacin', Peter does. But me and Hop 's got a tortus as is a wunner, guv'nor. A heap better nor Peter. Poor old Peter! he 's dead and gone. Be sure of that. This 'ere 's a reg'lar bad road. A prize-winner, war n't 'e, Hoppy?" They held up the prize-winner, who was *not* a tortoise, and was mangy.

"Look here, my boys, you can take her away, Now, be off. Quick march."

"Yer don't want it, guv'nor? Jest think agin. Why, 'ow will you get along without a cat? The mice is 'orrible in this 'ere road. Come, guv'nor, I 'll tell you what I 'll do. You shall 'ave a bargain," said Pop. "Goin' at two bob. What? Not two bob? One and a tanner. No? Say a bob? A tanner? Then blow me if I won't make yer a present of it, if you 're hard up."

I insisted that the tortoise prize-winner should be taken away, and the next day I stopped the advertisement

and resigned myself to despair. A week after Peter had disappeared I heard the voice of my friend Pop at the door. "I say, mister, I 've some noose. Come along o' me. I think I 've found 'im. Real. A blue ribbin round 'is neck and says 'is prayers. Put on yer 'at and foller, foller, foller me." Mr. Pop led the way along the road, and turned off to the right, and we walked up another road until we reached a large house which had been unoccupied for many months. The drains were up, and two or three workmen were busy. Pop at once introduced me as "the gent as was lookin' for his cat." "Have you seen a cat with a blue ribbon round his neck?" I asked them, very dubious as to the honesty of Pop's intention. "Well, sich a cat '*as* bin 'ere for some days," replied the workman to whom I had spoken. "He used to come when we were gettin' our bit of dinner. But we never know'd but wot it come from next door. You go up-stairs to the first-floor front, and you 'll see a sight. It was young Washus there as made the discovery." Young "Washus," so called from the nature of his daily avocations, led the way; I followed, and on the top of the stairs was Peter, who knew me at once, and began to purr and rub himself against my legs in a most affectionate manner, as if to appease any outburst of wrath on my part. I felt too pleased to be angry, and followed Peter into the empty room, which was littered with paper and rubbish, and the

remains of forty or fifty mice lay strewn about the floor. Peter looked up to me as if to say: "Not a bad bag—eh, master?" In the corner of the room was a bit of sacking which Peter had used as a bed. Pop explained to me that he had heard the men talking about the funny cat that came and dined with them every day. This conversation induced him to search the house, with the happy result that Peter was restored to the bosom of his sorrowing family, and Pop gave up the laundry basket, and invested the reward in a small private business of his own.

CHAPTER VII.

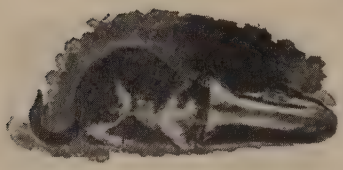
Peter in lodgings. Mrs. Nagsby and the euphonium. Sarah's base accusations against Peter. King Arthur the greyhound, and his adventure with Mrs. Nagsby's lady lodger. Peter steals Mrs. Nagsby's teeth, and the consequences.

PETER and I have had many homes in London and in the country. Together we have lived in flats, in hotels, in farm-houses, and in lodgings for single gentlemen. In

lodgings for single gentlemen we had many strange experiences which would occupy too much time to relate, and I will therefore touch but lightly upon this period of Peter's career. Peter, being a gentlemanly cat, never quarrelled with ladies, however hard they might be to please, and let them gird at him as they would. How often have I, when Mrs. Nagsby was complaining to me in no measured terms of the wickedness of Peter, compared that long-suffering cat to poor Colonel Newcome, when that gallant gentleman was at the mercy of Mrs. Mackenzie. For did not that gracious animal, when Mrs. Nagsby was accusing him of stealing fowls, say—did he not arch his bonny back and purr against Mrs. Nagsby's ankles and endeavor to appease her? In her softer moods she did sometimes relax, and even allowed Peter to sit by her side as she read the paper.

Peter was held responsible for every article that was lost in Mrs. Nagsby's apartments, and the amount of money I paid to that good lady for breakages in the course of six months would have furnished a small villa. There were few mornings when Mrs. Nagsby did not knock at my door with some tale of woe. The only really serious charge she made against my poor cat I will leave till the last, as it was the cause of our departure, and also because it will give me what the dramatists call a good curtain—that is, I shall finish the chapter with an effective situation. Mrs. Nagsby was a widow, and the late lamented Nagsby had supported her by his performances on the euphonium. This instrument was kept in a case in Mrs. Nagsby's little room, which was on the ground-floor back, and looked on to a series of dingy walls. Mrs. Nagsby used to polish up the euphonium every Saturday morning with a regularity which nothing prevented. Did it not speak volumes for her affection of the late lamented? On one of these Saturdays it happened that a German band stopped at the front door. Mrs. Nagsby could never resist the seductive power of brass music. She rushed up-stairs to the first-floor front to listen to the performance. Fate ordained it that Mrs. Nagsby should leave the precious euphonium on the floor in her haste to hear the band. Fate ordained it also that Peter should come down stairs at this particular moment and wend his way into Mrs. Nagsby's parlor. Fate also had ordained it that a mouse which lived in a hole behind Mrs. Nagsby's easy-

chair should issue at that this particular moment for a little bread-crumb expedition. Mrs. Nagsby was a careful housekeeper, and, finding no crumbs about, the mouse, whose motto was "*Toujours l'audace*," roamed into the silent highway presented by the orifice of the euphonium. It was natural enough that Peter should follow the mouse. Unfortunately, Peter's progress was stopped, the girth of his body being too great to admit him; and my door being open, I at once rushed to the rescue, and found Peter with his head in the depths of the euphonium, and making fierce struggles to vacate the position. Mrs. Nagsby came down stairs and entered her parlor just as I succeeded in extracting Peter from the musical instrument. Fiercely was I reproached for Peter's escapade, and humbly did I make his apologies, little knowing the secret of the plight from which I had rescued him. Having soothed my landlady, she at length took up the euphonium and proceeded to apply her eye to the main orifice to see if Peter had damaged it, handling the euphonium in the manner of a telescope. I was thinking of the reproaches in prospect, when I was startled by a loud shriek, to which the euphonium imparted a metallic vibration, and Mrs. Nagsby dropped the instrument on to the floor, the good lady herself following it with a thud. A wee mouse scuttled across her face, disappeared behind the easy-chair, and doubtless rejoined his anxious family. Mrs. Nagsby recovered after her maid-of-all-work and I had burnt a few sheets of brown paper under her nostrils; but I had great difficulty in making the peace. In vain I pointed out that the responsibility did not remain with me, or even with Peter. We agreed after some debate that it was the German band, which was never afterwards patronized by Mrs. Nagsby.



Later on I happened to relate this episode to a friend in the presence of my landlady, when he capped the story with one of his own, by way of sympathizing with Mrs. Nagsby in particular and with ladies in general who had a mortal horror of mice. He knew (he said) a young married couple whose life's happiness had been almost wrecked by a mouse. Their home contained a certain number of mice, like most houses. The lady had a horror of them. The gentleman had a horror of disposing of them when they were caught. One night the wife informed her husband that there were two mice in the trap, and bade him go and drown them. The humane husband got up from his chair, and going into the kitchen where the mice were, stealthily held the lever up and allowed the two little creatures, which were panting with fear, to escape. When he had done the fell deed he looked round, and to his dismay he saw his wife behind him, and to his horror the mice made for his wife's petticoats, in the intricacies of which they disappeared. The scene which followed beggared description (so the story went). The lady went into hysterics, the servants were roused, perfect Niagaras of sal-volatile were laid on, the doctor was sent for, the lady took to her bed for a week, and when she got up she asked for a judicial separation, declining to live with a man who treated his wife worse than a brute. The matter was settled amicably at last, after a hundred pounds had been spent in deeds and lawyers, upon the husband undertaking never to release a mouse again, and upon the lady, on her part, undertaking never to request him to drown mice, but to make it part of the cook's work.

If Mrs. Nagsby took a mean advantage of Peter's presence to lay upon his sleek shoulders the blame for breakages and thefts, you may be sure that her maid-servant, one Sarah, was not slow to follow her example.

Sarah and I used to differ constantly concerning the proper performance of certain household duties which lay in Sarah's path and affected my comfort. As Sarah stuttered, and I like rapidity, I used to scribble my complaints on scraps of paper which I affixed to the particular object in question. For instance, Sarah seldom cleaned my water-bottle, and I would write down, "Kindly clean out this bottle," and tie it to the bottle in question. Sarah would in her turn write the answer on the blank side of the paper, thus:

"Sir: The bottel 'as bin clean out. I does it reglar. It is as clean as it will come. Don't let your cat lick it."

Again:

"Please make my bed properly. I don't believe it has been shaken up for months, and the sheet has been rolled up at the foot of the bed for a month. I caught a flea this morning."

Answer:

"Sir: Your bed is shook up reglar. The sheet is rolled up becos its not long enough. The fleas belongs to Peter. Signed: Sarah."

I got into further trouble with Mrs. Nagsby owing to a greyhound which I had bought at a sale. I had no character with him, for he had no character. If Mrs. Nagsby had killed him with the meat hatchet I would have held my peace, for never a day passed but King Arthur took his name in vain. The first

night I brought him home Mrs. Nagsby gave me permission as a great favor to chain him to the kitchen table. In the morning two of the table legs had been mangled, and that is one reason why I called him King Arthur, of the Round Table. The next night King Arthur was taken up-stairs and attached to the leg of my wash-stand. I was awakened out of my beauty sleep by a horrible clamor which caused me to think that the house had fallen in. I presently realized that King Arthur had mistaken the water-jug for a dragon. In any case it was smashed to bits, and the noise brought Mrs. Nagsby to my door in anger. I should be sorry to say what King Arthur cost me in hard cash for breakages and legs of mutton. Poor Peter! thou wast a saint when compared with that fiend on four legs.

The *dénouement* came at last, and it arose from King Arthur's fondness for the ladies. There was nothing remarkable in the appearance of the old lady who was Mrs. Nagsby's favorite lodger, who had held the rooms above mine for three years. But the lady had a most beautiful sealskin jacket, trimmed with tails of sable. King Arthur had unluckily a feminine affection for furs, and I never dared to take him into any of the fashionable thoroughfares, as he had a way of following the ladies, not for their own dear sakes, but for the fur which they might happen to be wearing. Whether they were only tippets or dyed rabbit-skins, it did not matter to King Arthur.

Well, one unfortunate afternoon, I was leading my greyhound home. A few yards in front of us was Mrs. Nagsby's first-floor lady, taking the sun in all the glories of her sealskin jacket and sable tails. To my horror I dropped the chain in taking a match-box out of my pocket, and before I could take any steps to prevent him—*King Arthur was coursing Mrs. Nagsby's first-floor lodger at*

his highest rate of speed!!! King Arthur held on his course and literally took the old lady aback, and began to tear those choice sable tippets asunder. Nor was the base creature content to rest at the sable tippets. Before I reached his victim his mouth was full of sealskin. Let me pass on, merely saying that King Arthur was shot that night in the mews at the back of Mrs. Nagsby's, a victim to his own indiscretions.

And now I come to the fatal catastrophe which finally drove me and Peter from the shelter of Mrs. Nagsby's roof. That lady, owing to certain dental bereavements, supplied the gaps made by years by a set of false teeth which she was in the habit of depositing on her dressing-table when she went to bed. I had learned this from Sarah when that damsel was in a confidential mood, and she gave me to understand that "Missus Nagsby never gave 'er tongue a rest till she put 'er teeth to bed." Peter, I think I have told you, slept in my room. One very warm night Mrs. Nagsby left her door open, and her night light was burning as usual. I also slept with my door open, and Peter, being hot like the rest of us, left the room for a stroll, and visited Mrs. Nagsby's chaste apartment. Presently he came back with Mrs. Nagsby's teeth between his own—at least I suppose so, for I found them on the hearth-rug when I awoke. I was greatly amused, though a little puzzled to know how I could replace them. After some reflection I went down to breakfast, placed the trophy in a saucer and showed it to Sarah, who screamed and traitorously ran up and informed her mistress. Mrs. Nagsby came down rampant, but of course speechless. I

was thankful for this; but the violent woman, after sputtering spasmodically, caught sight of the missing article in the saucer, and, lost to all sense of shame, replaced it in position and poured forth a torrent of the most violent abuse.

Peter and I left.

CHAPTER VIII.

Life in Excelsior Mansions. The old graveyard and Peter's favorite tombstone. Concerning Deadman's Passage. The verger's story of the man who came to a violent end because he would have a fine coffin. Peter is lost. The flash of light on the window-blind.

THESE veracious memoirs are necessarily discursive and fragmentary. The straightest railway that ever engineer constructed has its curves and sidings. So when I drop you down in the country at the end of one chapter and pick you up a hundred miles in another direction at the beginning of the next you must not be surprised. Be kind enough, then, to imagine yourself in some rooms which commanded a fine view of a disused graveyard. It

was one of those queer oases which you come across in all parts of London. Here the old meets the new, and you find a substantial block of new buildings sandwiched in between tottering old houses which must soon fall a prey to the wrecker's pick. To many, an old graveyard would have offered but a depressing prospect. To me, I confess, it was a source of constant interest. Nay I even regarded the crumbling old tombstones with a subdued pleasure, as presenting a sermon on the affairs of life, which was none the less eloquent for being unspoken. One is conscious of so many flaws in the human preacher, that his exhortations have often but a momentary effect. Regarded from a practical point of view, the graveyard also offered a convenient playground for Peter, who loved

to doze away his days in the company of the dead, revelling, no doubt, in the life which was coursing through his veins. Then again, by the aid of a pair of opera-glasses, it was quite possible to spend many pleasant hours in watching the doings of the queer people who had pitched their tents in the surrounding houses.

If Excelsior House (that was the admirable name by which my block was known in the Post-Office Directory) had ever caught fire, it would have gone hard with me, for I was five floors up, but the airiness of my eyrie was sufficient compensation for any fears on the score of fire.

The houses which bounded the graveyard ran even higher, and extended into garrets, and gruesome enough, and gloomy enough, and even criminal, some of those windows looked. Some of them certainly belonged to bird-fanciers, to judge by the number of cages which were hung out on sunny days. One roof was devoted to fowls, and one tenant even went so far as to keep a donkey, but that was on the lower floor. Through my glass I saw rooms with low ceilings blackened with smoke and the fumes from much preparation of fried food; rooms which accommodated large families, whose furniture consisted chiefly of a family bed; rooms in which flowers were wired and laid in baskets

for the street-corners; rooms in which various ill-rewarded industries were plied. You had only to pay your money and take your choice.

A narrow passage ran along one side of the graveyard (which, by the way, was facetiously called the "bone-orchard"), and this was the favorite rendezvous of the workers from the adjacent premises of a jobbing printer. Thither they came to smoke their after-dinner pipes, and drink their beer, which was brought to them from the bar of the "Anchorage," the favorite public-house of the neighborhood, which was connected with the main street beyond by Deadman's Passage, a dark and villainous alley, through which passed street musicians and street merchants of every sort and condition. Down Deadman's Passage came, too, sandwichmen, who dropped their boards and produced mysterious parcels of old newspapers. These always seemed to contain other parcels of old newspapers, which ultimately proved to contain a very crusty crust, and a very little chunk of very yellow cheese. Now and then even a Punch and Judy show found its way through Deadman's Passage and gave the inhabitants a performance.

As for the graveyard itself, it presented every possible assortment of tombs. There were high tombs and low tombs; tombs plain and tombs chased and chiselled by a race of artificers long since dead and gone. There were slabs straight, slabs crooked, slabs flat, and slabs broken and doubled up in the middle as if by some convulsion of nature. It was always said that these were the results of premature burials. Then there were the tombs of old inhabitants who had been placed there a hundred years ago, as was shown by the remains of illegible letters. Nor did I ever see a finer assortment of angels than was gathered together in my graveyard; some of them, alas! with broken noses, and others with half a wing gone. Sooty

and grimy was the grass that grew in patches; sooty and grimy the few flowers which grew up here and there, planted by none knew who, in defiance of all the laws of botany. Dissipated and bedraggled were the scraggy shrubs which had also found a passage upwards, and bore a scanty crop of leaves in the summer. Grim and desolate in winter, in summer the old churchyard with its patches of green and its melancholy shrubs served as a pleasant playground for the children who lived in the neighborhood, and afforded a delightful retreat for the poorer residents, who smoked their evening pipes by the rusty rails, and gossiped in the cool of the evening. As for the dogs and the cats, I cannot think what they would have done without it. They slept in perfect amity amongst the tombstones. When night came the dogs retired to their own particular domestic hearths, and the cats—the cats by scores emerged from every quarter, and scampered over those gray stones which looked so ghostlike on the moonlight nights.

The church itself was like the rest of the neighborhood, crumbling, and almost forgotten. The verger, or whatever he called himself, lived on coffins which he manufactured in an adjacent street, and he looked as thin and cadaverous and as jerry-built as one of his own shells. On one occasion a customer had remonstrated with him—on behalf of a friend of course—on the inferiority of the article which he had supplied for a certain melancholy occasion. "The nearer the earth the sooner it 's over. It 's a real kindness to make 'em thin, I tell you," replied the verger. "I knew a man what was hanged through a 'ankerin' after too good a coffin. He had poisoned his own brother, and out of kindness, I suppose, being his brother, he came to me and ordered a particular thick

one. 'None of your mere veneer for me,' says he. 'He was my brother, and he shall have the best I can afford.'

In a year's time comes an exhumation order from the Home Office; and they found the poison in the body, and the brother confessed. After the sentence a scrap of paper was put into my hands, which I have framed in my shop now. 'Stick to thin ones; it was all owing to my false pride. I should have had veneer, and not a sign would have been left. I 'm sorry I can't give you my job. That belongs to Gov'nment.'" This interesting episode of his professional experiences Mr. Snewin imparted to me as we smoked a pipe together on my favorite grave.

I have described my old graveyard and its surroundings with some care, because Peter and I sometimes took our walks therein. Peter indulged in none of the vulgar pranks which the low-bred cats of the neighborhood were wont to play, but in his sedate way he followed me up and down the walks, and over the old tombstones, and smelt the wallflowers, and ate a blade or two of grass, and occasionally chased a sparrow, and more than once when he

found the doors open strayed into the church, in search of a church mouse, I suppose. I put no restraint on his liberty, and he often found his way down the backstairs and sunned himself on one of the tombstones for hours together. One night I was working late against time; the usual procession of musicians had come down Deadman's Passage; the red-nosed flautist who had descended to the penny-whistle had played, "Come into the Garden, Maud," and "The Last Rose of Summer," for the benefit of this favored neighborhood; the broken-down concert-singer had made her last effort to reach her top notes, and, having failed, dropped in to mellow them with stout, which is well known to be a favorite medicine with the profession; a professor on the concertina had executed the "Carnival of Venice" in his most exquisite manner; and the musical spirits in the back parlor of the "Anchorage" had just been reminded that "Time was up!"—in short, the neighborhood was just going to bed, and there were four quiet hours before it would wake up again.

Horror!

I MISSED PETER. I was terrified. I hunted high, I hunted low, I cried "Peter," I whispered "Puss," I scanned the moonlit tombstones with my glass, I scanned the adjacent roofs, I looked everywhere, and no Peter was to be found. I knocked at the back-door of the "Anchorage," and having been rebuffed with a "You 've had enough. Can't serve any more," I was told that Peter had not been seen. Heavy of heart, I mounted up to my eyrie again, lighted a cigarette, and sat at the open window wondering where Peter had gone. With a start which I

cannot express I remembered a popular fried-fish shop in the main street; with a thrill of fear I recalled the eel-pie shop which competed with the fried-fish. It was a queer neighborhood. Heavens! Was it possible that Peter could have been destined for such an ignominious end as eel-pie? My heart beat at an alarming rate, and my ears, sharpened with anxiety, caught the dull monotonous thuds of certain machinery which I knew to portend sausages. * * * The clock in the church chimed the four quarters and struck one; all was silent, even the thudding of the machinery had ceased, and except the sound of a drunken brawler in the distance, and the rattle of a belated hansom, silence reigned. I paced up and down my room, and once more went to the window, when, to my astonishment, I saw a bright flash in a window opposite. This was followed by another, and yet another, until I was nearly sent out of my senses by these extraordinary phenomena. Suddenly a lamp was lighted in the room, and the white blind was drawn down. I waited nervously for a moment, when I saw what appeared to be a rigid hoop projected against the window, and the body of a dog, wonderfully distorted against the calico blind, leap through the hoop, which was now turned at right angles to my window. Another respite, and the hoop disappeared, some confused figures appeared at the window against the blind, the light went out, and lo! another flash of light, into which the dog bounded, apparently all aflame. Then all was dark again. Another respite gave me time to wonder what these extraordinary phenomena portended, when suddenly the lamp was lighted, and upon the blind was reflected the figure of a cat, indubitably a cat, and, will you believe me? *in the act of saying his prayers.* In the hundredth part of a second it flashed across me that no other cat but Peter prayed in that holy and sincere manner. *There* against

the calico blind was my dear cat, with his paws clasped together and his head up as if invoking my help. It was too much. Hatless and breathless I darted down stairs, crossed the graveyard, regardless of consequences, and

threw a small chunk of a tombstone up at the window. It failed to hit the mark, but evoked the violent wrath of a sleepy costermonger, who hurled a cabbage at my defenceless head, and brought his window down with

a slam. Fearful of arousing the neighborhood, I returned to my room, and once more looked through my glass to see if Peter was still praying. All was dark, so I went to bed feeling sad and doubtful as to the fate of Peter.

CHAPTER IX.

I dream horrible dreams, and make inquiries respecting Peter. A friendly potman puts me on the scent, and takes me to see a famous Professor who works a cat-and-dog show.

I DREAMT a strange dream that Friday night; uncanny flashes of flame and distorted cats haunted my pillow. I awoke late, and did not begin to make my promised investigations until midday. I thought it would be no easy task that I had before me, for the denizens of the human forest where I expected Peter to be were a suspicious race. Every stranger was suspected of being a policeman in disguise, who wanted something or somebody. However, through the friendly agency of a potman, I was fortunate enough to hear something to my advantage. He was the potman at the "Anchorage," with whom I had oddly enough ingratiated myself a week before by subscribing to a small testimonial to his wife on the occasion of her presenting him with twins, their arrival being celebrated by a curious and sociable ceremony known as a "Friendly Lead," which came off in the first-floor parlor, a galaxy of talent honoring the potman by their presence. The fact that I had dropped a whole shilling into the tin plate which was presided over by the potman's wife, holding a twin in each arm, raised me to a very high position in the eyes of the potman and his wife, and perhaps the twins, though they could not, of course, express their thanks so heartily. When Joe saw me drop in the shilling

he looked at me, and then at Mrs. Joe, and whispered to me: "The Victoria Cross next time." I smiled, but failed to see the point of the remark, though it called forth some rude laughter from that portion of the company who were near enough to hear it. It struck me afterwards that Joe associated the Victoria Cross with the Queen's Bounty, but I may be wrong. This little passage explained the readiness of Joe to answer my questions respecting Peter. Had he seen anything of Peter? No, he had n't. Nor heard anything of him? No. Had Mrs. Joe? No. Mrs. Joe was too busy with the twins. Did he know who lived in that room across the "orchard"? Yes, he did. It was a gentleman known as the Professor, who had just arrived in town from circuit. He was a Professor. A what? In the public business, had a caravan and worked dogs and cats. "Cats!" cried I, "why, that explains it all. Take me to him, Joe." Presently Joe, having obtained the permission of his master, took me through Deadman's Passage into the main street. Then we dodged down another passage, and turned once or twice to the right and left, when I found myself before a low door from which most of the paint had curled off, and the rest was crackling like a piece of roast sucking-pig. A brass door-plate, very dirty, bore the name of "Sir Bartholomew Knox, Bart., M.D.," which I pointed out to my faithful guide, and said that we really could n't be right. "Ah! you 're not fly, sir. That 's the Professor's name, 'Knox!'" "But he 's not a Baronet and M.D.—come now?" Joe then informed me that "Mr. Knox, otherwise known as the Professor, had picked up the door-plate cheap, for the Professor always says you can gammon the British public

into believing anything, if it 's only in print, so he 's always called Professor Bart in these parts, and this is his town house."

There was no need to ring, for the front door was partly open. We walked into a narrow passage, which smelt very much like a menagerie, when we stopped for a moment, interrupted by the sound of a piping voice apparently engaged in addressing an audience:

> "' Ere yer 'ave a box in a theaytre; and there yer 'ave a lady's fan; and 'ere yer 'ave a lamp-shade; and now yer 'ave a bunch o' roses, all a-blowin' and a-growin'; and 'ere yer 'ave Buffalo Bill's 'at; and there yer 'ave the Doochess of Devonsheer.

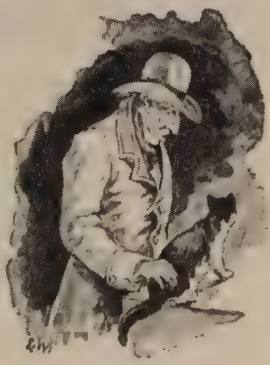
And who the doose be you? What 's up," cried the boy as he caught sight of us. "We 're after that cat as says his prayers—last seen on your premises." "We 've no cat as misbehaves hisself, Joseph, in this 'ere crib. Anyways I knows nothink. You must ask the Professor." "Where is the Professor, you young cough-drop?" "Don't call me names, or I 'll make you swaller one. * * * Now then, ladies and gents, 'ere yer 'ave a box in a theaytre; and there yer 'ave a lady's fan; and 'ere yer 'ave a lamp-shade; and now yer 'ave a bunch o' roses, all a-blowin' and a-growin'," and the young gentleman, who was scantily glad in a pair of trousers, with the braces hanging loose, and a dirty flannel shirt, again transferred his attentions to the piece of tissue paper in his hands, which he transformed with amazing dexterity into the different shapes indicated in his address. "What is he?" I asked, quite failing to understand his mysterious address. "He 's one of the Professor's pupils. He 's a-rehearsing and eddicating hisself for the cough-drop business, and a powerful good business too, but it needs a lot of learning. He 's one of the Professor's most promisink young uns."

All that we could extract from young "cough-drop" was a promise to impart to the Professor that I had lost my cat, and that I thought he might have paid so famous a connoisseur a call.

CHAPTER X.

Night in Smith's Row. Introduces the human fly and the lion-maned lady, who perform some staggering feats. The Professor owns that he has just bought an educated cat, and invites me to call and see him.

In spite of the assurances of my acquaintance of the "Anchorage" I began to fear that Peter had gone forever, and when I returned to my rooms and contemplated the tortuous windings of the labyrinth around me my spirits sank below zero. Fatalist as I am, I murmured "Kismet," and prepared for the best or the worst as it might be, determined, however, to leave no winding unexplored to discover my lost friend. The chase proved successful, and was the means of introducing me to some of those byways of our civilization which always had a fascination for me. If you prefer the highways kindly skip the next two or three chapters.



As evening drew in I sallied forth once more and knocked at the Professor's door. The door was locked, and I was informed by a small boy in the court that Bart had gone to his show in Smith's Row.

It was Saturday night, and Smith's Row, which was close by, was aflame with the light from a thousand naphtha lamps; and the cries of the contending competitors for your custom were deafening. It was not an easy matter to force one's way through the surging crowd, which moved slowly. Housewives with baskets on arm

lingered longingly before the array of juicy meat and the strings of rabbits; husbands chinked their wages in their pockets, and debated whether they should invest in fish, flesh, or game. There were a thousand attractions to conjure the coin out of their thinly lined pockets. The grocers in particular offered extraordinary inducements; such as Japanese cabinets, footstools, crockery, china ornaments, and even "hand-painted" oil pictures, to purchasers of a half-pound of tea. In Smith's Row you could buy two umbrellas for a shilling; a pair of boots for sixpence; a pair of trousers for as much again; and a whole library for a penny. In the distance I could hear young "cough-drop" bidding the British public buy his never-failing specific for consumption, colds, sore heads, sore throats, sore fingers, or any other ailments. As I pushed my way through the crowd I found that the young man's business was being apparently prejudiced by the proprietor of an elaborate establishment, in which was to be seen the "human fly," a famous female who walked on the ceiling, her deeds of daring being pictorially represented on the canvas. Being unable to reach the dispenser of drops, I passed through the canvas door, thinking that the voluble showman might be the Professor. I passed in and found the "human fly" sitting by a coke fire roasting chestnuts, and chatting affably with a matronly female clad in gay attire, rather the worse for wear. The canvas door of the show was hooked up, so as to allow the crowd in the street to obtain a glimpse of the wonders within, represented by the two ladies roasting chestnuts, and the proprietor pointed with a long wand, first to the awe-inspiring picture on his canvas, and then to the homely and comfortable couple feasting on chestnuts—as he remarked, just like two of the most ordinary every-day females. At last the door was closed, the master announced that the performance was about to begin, and the human fly, who was a

pretty little brunette of sixteen or seventeen, dressed in a pair of shrunken red cotton tights and a black velvet bodice laden with tarnished spangles, lifted herself on to the trapeze which hung from the ceiling. After turning a sommersault or two she placed her feet in the master's hands, and he proceeded to adjust a pair of articles which looked like a cross between goloshes, rinking skates, and pattens. With great caution she turned round, and hanging head-down, hoisted herself up until the fairy slippers were flat on a broadish beam which was part of the roof. She then let go, and with great caution walked for a couple of yards along the beam, turned round and walked back amidst general applause from the enthusiastic audience. "If you think the young lady is worthy of a copper, I raise no objections," said the showman; "or if you like to buy any of her portraits, or a little book of her life, why, you will have the opportunity. Music, Johnny," to a little boy in charge of an organ. The human fly then descended from her dizzy pedestal, took off her goloshes, and made a collection in one of her slippers.

I had hoped to question the showman as to his identity, but his time was precious, and he had already given his hand to the other lady, who was also attired in red tights, velvet, and spangles, whom he introduced as the lion-maned lady, proceeding to relate her history, which was indeed a remarkable one. Her father, according to the Professor, had been a captain in India. He was ordered to visit a distant station, and took his young and beautiful "missus" with him. Here I continue the rela-

tion of the horrible tragedy that was told us as nearly in the showman's own language as I can remember: "Ha! me, a pretty Bank 'Oliday was that! Well, the capting and his missus travelled and travelled until they come to a thick forest, which was full of lions and tigers—as thick as fleas in a blanket. Well, to make a long story short, the lions attacked the capting, who says to his missus: 'Get behind me,' and outs with his sword, and outs with his gun, and outs with his baginet. The gun missed fire, the baginet bent, and the sword broke, and the lion knocked the capting down and clored him up until he hung in strips like cats' meat on a skewer. The lady climbed up a tree and fainted at the 'orrible spectickle, whence she was rescued by a tribe of friendly Indians and took 'ome to her ma. On her arrival she gave buth to a female hinfant, which was born with a mane owin' to the fite. This lady—let down your black 'air, my dear—is that female hinfant. Well, if you reads your Bible and goes to church, you know well enough that out of evil good may come. This lady now makes a 'onest livin' out of her 'air. The press of the world has spoken in the highest terms of her 'air, and not a week passes but what some new 'air lotion offers her cash down just to say that her 'air is the result of their lotion. She 's a 'onest woman and spurns away the serpints. They 've grown better since old mother Eve. The lion-'aired lady is also a hairynaut. I suppose you 've all heard o' the strong-jawed woman, and how she comes down with a balloon a-'angin' on by her teeth. Well, she ain't in it with my lion-'aired lady. Last year, you may believe me or not—(it was at a Primrose fête),—she descended a mile a-'angin' on by the 'air of 'er 'ed, curled up at the end with a 'ook, and fixed to the car of the hairynaut." Having worked the impressionable audience up into a state of feverish excitement, the lion-maned one tied her hair into a knot,

and, as the Professor said, "'ung by it to the trapeze." It was something of an anti-climax, to be sure, but it gave me an excuse for introducing myself to the showman by asking him how long the lady's hair was, asking him at the same time if he knew the Professor known as Bart. "What do you want with him?" asked the showman, "for I love him like a father." "Well, there 's nothing like coming to the point. I have lost a pet cat, and have an idea that he has strayed to the Professor's; in fact, I am credibly informed that he has done so." "Describe the animal." "Black and white." "Was he a eddicated cat?" "He was well brought up." "Was he given to roamin'?" "Sometimes." "Had he a pertickler weakness—in the way of victuals, for instance?" "He was fond of cats' meat." "Well," went on the Professor, "my name *is* Bart, and I 've got a black and white cat which *is* highly eddicated. And how do you think I got 'im? Prigged 'im, I suppose? Well, I did n't. I got 'im from Katzmit, a neighbor o' mine. He knows I 'm always in the market where eddicated cats is in question. Katzmit said he followed him when he went out with his barrer. Would I give five bob for him? Would I try him? Yes. I would try him, and there he is up in my garret at this momink. If he knows you when he sees you, he 's yours again. If he don't, he 's mine. Will you shake hands on it?" Professor Bart asked me to call the next day, when he would be disengaged, being the Sabbath, and, thanking him, I departed, feeling very much relieved.

CHAPTER XI.

I call upon the Professor and once more encounter the human fly and the lion-maned lady. The Professor and the mermaid. The performing cats and the flashes of fire. The midnight vision explained in a very simple way. I stop and dine with the Professor.

THE next day I had no difficulty in obtaining access to the Professor's domestic hearth, which was just being swept and garnished by a young lady whom I recognized as the human fly, a fact which astonished me not a little. I was even more surprised to find the lion-maned lady seated in an easy-chair, sunning herself by the open window, which looked over the graveyard. I should have felt the presence of these distinguished ladies a little confusing if the Professor had not stepped into the parlor in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a short clay pipe, and introduced me to the ladies, who proved to be none other than his wife and daughter. "Then the stories you told last night, Professor?" "Exactly, sir. You 've hit it. Work of imagination." Here the Professor tapped his forehead. "It 's no use, sir. They all do it. The public expect it. In our business you must have the *re*markable. There is money in a dog with three legs. A dog that has four is no good. Do you see that mermaid under that glass case? Bring it, Lizzie dear." The human fly brought the glass case and placed it on the table, and I saw a hideous monstrosity with the head of an ape, covered with hair, with open eyes, projecting teeth, and the body of a fish, the whole reposing on an admirable imitation of rock, surrounded

by a sea of glass. "Now, sir, I 'm a-letting you into our secrets. You can't gammon the press—oh no! I 've made a lot o' money in my small way out of the old gal. She 's played out now, and is on the shelf, as you see. The head 's of plaster-of-Paris, and the tail is a stuffed codfish with the head cut off. Do you think the tail of the codfish was a marketable objeck beyond sixpence even when she was fresh? No. Well, I applies my knowledge of the market and supplies a mermaid which the public paid to see. They paid for my knowledge. That 's how I see it. But you 're worriting about your cat, or my cat," said the Professor, dropping his right eye. This was the cue for the lion-maned lady, who disappeared for a minute and returned with PETER—yes, PETER, in her arms. The moment he saw me he leapt on to my shoulder, and rubbed his face against my cheek, and purred, and made so many demonstrations of affection that the lady and Professor exclaimed with one breath: "There 's no doubt about it, sir. He 's yours. I 'm sorry, for he would have made himself a name in our business. But what made you think *we* had him? I then described the vision at the window in the dead of night, and asked with curiosity for an explanation of the flashes of light. The lady winked at her husband, the husband winked at his wife, and both laughed heartily, and then the Professor informed me that his wife ran a show of her own in the summer, a cat show, which she took round the country in a caravan. Upon my expressing a hope that it was not owing to matrimonial differences they both laughed, and explained that two shows turned in more than one, and they looked forward to the time when they could run a united establishment.

"You would like to see my cats," asked the Professor's lady. "You would. Then follow me. Bart, go and get the properties ready, while I show the gentleman where the cats live when they 're at home." Carrying Peter with me we mounted up four flights of steps until we came to a garret in which a dozen cats of all nations were reposing comfortably in beds of straw, with two great bowls of milk at their disposal. A wire netting protected the open window, up to which the cats could climb when they felt disposed. Bart now called us down-stairs, the cats following their mistress without a murmur. We descended to the second floor, where I found that all the preparations for a rehearsal had been made by Bart. Two doors of two rooms were thrown open, and between them ran a row of half-a-dozen chairs gaudily painted, and joined together by two thin strips of timber in order to keep them firm, and along these was ranged a row of wooden bottles painted to resemble Bass's beer. These were taken away, and were replaced by a tight-rope, at each end of which was a veritable castle with a tower. The Union Jack floated bravely in the breeze on each castle, and I was watching for the next move, when suddenly one of the windows of the castle opened, bars and all, and out

marched a fine Persian cat, with a bell jangling from a light blue ribbon. Boldly he stepped out on to the rope, walking with wonderful precision on his giddy way. Scarcely had he started than through the castle window

emerged Shah, Oliver Cromwell, Bluebottle, Randolph Churchill, the Grand Old Man, Hop Bitters, Four Half, Bitter Beer, and the Bogie Man, some other cats of the troupe, yellow, gray, black, white, and mottled, gayly attired in silks and satins, with ribbons at their necks, who followed the footsteps of the general to the other castle, all, that is, with the exception of Four Half, a melancholy tabby, who tripped half-way across and fixed her claws into Oliver Cromwell, who scratched Four Half's nose, compelling her to release her hold and sending her down into the castle moat below. This little catastrophe did not damp the spirits of Mr. Bart, who urged the cats on by a word of praise or reproof as was necessary. Some purred, some jibbed, some spat during their progress from one castle to another, but they all seemed to enjoy the excitement. As fast as they crossed the bridge each cat bolted through the castle window, until every one had disappeared. "You don't mind mice, do you?" asked Mrs. Bart, who, upon my replying that I rather liked them than otherwise, produced a score or so from a cage, and placed them on a thicker rope which was now stretched from the flag-staff of one castle to the flag-staff of the other. The mice sat quite contentedly on the rope. Mr. Bart gave the word, the window of the castle opened, and out marched the cats again on their return journey, which was now made across the rope, over the mice, and over again, and when the journey was completed without a hitch, not a mouse was touched, not a mouse had even been in danger. "That always brings the house down," exclaimed Mrs. Bart, with pride; "and now for the fire hoops, and there we 'll stop, as it 's Sunday. Down with the blinds, Bart; bring me the matches," and in a moment the two hoops which Mrs. Bart held in her hand were a blaze of light, and Whiskey, a lithe Tom with a magnificent pair of whiskers and a

decided grin on his face, jumped through the fiery circles without a symptom of alarm. This performance accounted in a simple way for the phenomena which I had thought so strange, and Mrs. Bart subsequently explained why she had chosen the silent hour of the night for a rehearsal, by remarking that she did n't want any more of them blessed fire-engines a-comin' an' sousin' her out of hearth and home, which they had done on a former occasion, a too inquisitive neighbor having called them out, and "then had the cheek to ask me for five shillings, the impudent busybodies." "And you were seeing what my cat could do, Mrs. Bart?" "Yes, sir. I had him on the table there, and he put his paws together, raised his eyes, and prayed as natural as a parson. I felt rayther scared when I saw him, I can tell you." We then returned to the parlor, and Bart asked me, in order to clear myself of all suspicion that he was a cat thief, if I would like to see his friend Katzmit, who could further explain. Here was a possible opportunity of being initiated into the mysteries of one of the most mysterious callings, the cats'-meat-man's, the secrets of which had always puzzled me, so I said that I should like nothing better, and it was resolved that I should accompany the Professor on the next Sunday. "But don't go yet. Stop and have a bit of dinner now you are here," said this hospitable showman. So Peter and I stopped and dined with the philosophical Professor and his interesting family.

CHAPTER XII.

An interlude which deals with a bull-dog with glass eyes and cruel teeth. The dog's remarkable history and his lamentable end.

After dinner we sat and smoked, and the Professor told me some of his adventures. "You see that trophy there," said my host. "It 's got a history." The trophy was a bull-dog with savage features, glaring glass eyes, and cropped ears. His mouth was open, and disclosed a battery of the whitest and cruellest teeth I had ever seen. The dog's head was resting on his fore-paws, and projected out of a kennel, and stuffed though he was, I could not refrain from starting, though I readily understood that the trophy was a monument to some homely virtues which were not indicated by any letters of brass or sculptor's allegory. "An old friend?" said I. There was a spasmodic movement in the Professor's ample bosom which betokened a sigh. "That dog 's got a history. His name was Death. There was a time when no cheen that ever was forged would hold him. And look at the poor feller now, a-lyin' there as helpless as a new-born babby, and his grinders as fine a set as I ever see'd out of a tooth-puller's show-case. Ah me! Strong men, and strong dogs, they all go down. What a moral, guv'nor, what a moral! Many a golden sovering I 've made out of good old Death there." "Why, you 're a regular Midas, Professor. Dead

or alive, you turn them into gold." "Ay, sir. There 's them as says a live dog is better nor a dead lion. Rubbidge, says I. A man, a showman that is, as can't turn a penny out of a dead lion don't know his business. Well, you want to hear about Death. Here goes. Old woman, where 's my lectur?" After fumbling about in a chest of drawers for a few minutes the Professor's wife produced a handful of faded bills, in which were proclaimed the monster attractions offered by the impresario at various periods of his career. At last she produced a dirty copy-book, stained with beer and coffee, dog-eared and greasy with much handling, which Mr. Bart seized upon. "This is it, sir. This is the lectur. Well, sir, I used to do a turn

with old Death there mostly in the country districts where they 're not spoiled by Lunnun. Things has changed since them days. Now everybody 's a schollard."

"Well, now—you 'll excuse me if I stand up," interrupted the Professor, adjusting his collar and clearing his throat. "Ladies and gents, I 'm a-goin' to tell you the history of this 'ere dog. (I had the glass case on a table afore 'em.) It is a true story (it *is* a true story) I 'm goin' to tell you, and a story with a lot of morals (*stage direction:* this can be left out accordin' to discretion and audience). You see him now laid low; his teeth would n't 'urt a fly now, poor feller; his tail ain't no wag in it; the savage in his eye is only make-believe, a bit of glass; his bellows won't work; in short, as fine a bull-terrier as ever

walked on three legs and a half—I wish to be truthful, ladies and gents: he lost half a leg in a trap, for he was a poacher—is now stiff and stark. And why is he stiff and stark? Because he did his dooty as well as ever Lord Nelson we hear so much on did. I might have said Lord Wellinton, but I says Lord Nelson, because he was half a limb short too, like my bull-terrier. Dogs or men, if you do your dooty in this little spear you must be prepared for such little misfortunes. We now come to Act 1.

"It was a bitter winter's night. I had just come home and was having a little supper when a sharp knock at the door gave us a startler. I went to see who it was, not feeling very pleased at being disturbed at such an hour. 'Bart, let me in, for God's sake,' said the stranger, 'I 'm wanted.' 'You 're not wanted here, Mr. Apple Blossom,' says I—for I reco'nized one of the sharpest sharps that ever went on a race-course,—feeling very wild. It *was* a name, Apple Blossom, was n't it? And such a broken-down blossom, a blossom with a cough which shook him like a earthquake, in a shabby old overcoat full of holes, a blossom wringing wet, as if the fire brigade had mistaken him for a big blaze, and had tried to put him out. He shivered and shook with the cold, and I was just going to give him a shilling and send him away when the missus recognized him and begged me to let him come in. 'Don't be 'ard a night like this. Not a night like this. Hear his cough,' says the missus. I did n't like it, I did n't like Apple Blossom, and I did n't like the brute of a dog which stood at his heels; but I gave way to the missus. What did I say, missus?" "You said I was all 'art, and let him in!" "'And is the dog to have lodging too?' said I, sarcastic. 'Don't separate us,' said Apple Blossom. 'Don't separate us. He 's the only friend I 've got left, and the worst on us likes to cling to something.' In five minutes Apple Blossom and his dog

were sitting before a roaring fire and partaking of our meal. We never asked him what he was wanted for, poor chap, for we could see plain enough he would soon be took by him as won't take no for a answer. Well, to cut a long story short, we put Mr. Apple Blossom and his dog up aloft in a little room we had empty, and made them as comfortable as we could. They did n't ruin us, for in a week Apple Blossom was stiff and stark as that 'ere bull-terrier, which you will know now was once Apple Blossom's. The night he died he called me to him, and said—it was n't more than a whisper: 'Bart, I 'm goin' this time, and I 'm glad on it. Bart, they allus said you was a good 'un. They spoke the truth. Bart, I ain't got one coin to rub against another. I can't leave you my portmanty, for I ain't got one. I can't leave you my wardrobe. But—Bart—I 'll leave you—my—dog,' pointing to the poor brute, who was sitting sullenly on the bed, and howlin' most melancholy, as if he understood what his master was saying. 'Oh! cheer up, Apple Blossom, never say die,' I said, trying to make the best of it. And then he dozed off again. About an hour later I went upstairs again and found him stroking the dog, which was licking his face. The moment he heard my footsteps the brute growled fiercely, and for the life of me I dare n't go near the dying man's bed. 'Bart,' he whispers, 'Bart. Here! I want to say something. Quick, quick.' I bent my ear to his mouth. 'Give him gin when he 's obstropolous, Bart. Give him gin, and he 'll stick to you!' and his head sank back and Apple Blossom was dead.

"You may not have noticed it, ladies and gents, but this world 's made up of pulling your handkerchiefs out of your pockets and puttin' of 'em back again. The cryin' follows so quick on the laughin', and *vice versa*. We 've scarce had time to dry our eyes with one sort of tears when another sort comes wellin' up. I never could make

out whether the dead man was jokin' with his dyin' breath when he said as Death would stick to me, meaning teeth, and not 'art. If he did he was mistook, for Death and I were pals for a long time. But we had a rare job in gettin' the body away, as I shall never forget. Death lay there on the bed, and if any of us went near he opened his mouth and growled like a cage full of lions. I had bought a shell cheap—a misfit, by the way—and when the man came with it Death went on so that he dropped it and flew down-stairs, and nothin' would induce him to come back again. It was gettin' serious, when I met a friend who was a bit of a surgeon, and he says, 'Pison him.' 'No,' says the missus, 'drug him.' 'No,' says I, remembering Apple Blossom's dying words, 'fetch sixpennort of Old Tom,' which they did, and poured it into a basin. We left the room for a few minutes, and when we came back the dog was nearly as dead asleep as his master. And that was how we were able to carry away all that was left of Apple Blossom.

"And the bull-terrier became quite a character, for every one got to hear of the Old Tom.

"It was weeks before the dog forgot his master, but the missus got round him with her wheedlin' ways and her tit-bits. He travelled with us for more than three years, and a more faithful beast never was. Stick to us! I should think he did, and in the nicest, kindest way, in spite of that ugly set of teeth of his. Well, one day we were at our little crib in town, and I had thirty pounds in notes in my pocket. I had won the Derby sweep, which was drawn at the Blue Dog in our neighborhood, where, by the way,

there 's more money than you 'd expect. I did the perlite and went home, always knowin' where to stop, as my wife says; it 's not drinkin' she objects to, it 's the art of stoppin' as is so hard to learn. Well, I goes home, locks up, and goes to bed. About three A.M. I was woke up from my beauty sleep by my wife there. 'There 's somebody in the house.' 'Gammon,' says I. 'No gammon,' says she. Then I heard loud cries and shrieks, and sounds of glass breaking, and the dog hollering out at the top of his voice. Before I got down stairs the police were in the house. The burglars had bolted. 'That dog ought to be in the force,' said the bobby, quite serious. 'That dog would rise in the force. That dog would be all stripes. *He 's* arter 'em.' Another loud shriek. 'He 's got em!' Then through the open door Death bolted back again with a piece of trouser in his mouth, and his jaws was dripping. 'That dog should be in the force. Good-night,' repeated the officer, as he put the bit of cloth in his pocket and went away, adding: 'You need fear nothin'. That dog 's a 'ero.'

"But the burglars did come again, and what was much worse I went down one morning and found Death dead on the door-mat. A half-eaten piece of beef-steak, smelling strongly of gin, was by his side. It was gin again, and there was a cruel wound on his head which had killed him. Round his neck was a scrap of paper on which was scrawled: 'The biter bit this time.' Death had yielded to the gin, and they had murdered him when he was in liquor. They knew his little failin'."

"A true story, Professor?"

"A true story."

"And the moral?"

"Too much Old Tom ain't good for man nor beast."

CHAPTER XIII.

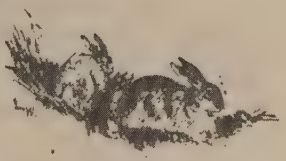
I go with the Professor on a Sunday excursion to the East End. The bird market. Mr. Chaffinch, the dog- and bird-fancier. I am introduced to the purveyor of cats' meat to the Royal Family, who is inclined to be haughty; and also make the the acquaintance of Miss Tew and the white mice.

"PERHAPS you 'd like to see the gen'lman wot brought your cat to me, would you?" asked the Professor. "I 'll introduce you, if you like. He 's the sort o' chap you 'd like to know. In the bird line, and animals." I accepted the Professor's kind proposal, and we met at a certain city pump on Sunday morning, that being the only day when the "old original Chaffinch" was likely to be found at home. "Don't it strike you, guv'nor, how precious like a overgrown graveyard this 'ere metropolus is of a Sunday," were the first words of the Professor as I greeted him. "Jest look at them banks; now ain't they like family vaults? As old Moore says: 'Not a sound you hear, not a furious note.'" It was quite true indeed. It was impossible to divest myself of the idea as we walked through the deserted streets. A melancholy hawker was trudging wearily to the west; a few gaudy Jewesses, resplendent in velvet and jewels, were pacing along, intent on some distant rendezvous; an empty omnibus was rolling along the asphalt, the clatter of the horses' hoofs making a thousand echoes in the old city. The daily Babel is hushed; the din of a million wheels is heard no more; the mysteri-

ous indescribable uproar composed of a thousand sounds has stopped. The life which was beating so fiercely through its veins a few hours ago is still, and it is as if one of those wicked enchantresses we read of in the Arabian Nights had cast a spell over the great city which sleeps so soundly this cold gray morning. The striving armies have retreated; the doors of the great banks are double-bolted; the warehouses are fortresses; the sombre courts and alleys which seethe with human life six days out of the seven are weird and still. Only a ring of bells reminds us that the city still breathes. It is Sunday, and the city is in the hands of the clergy and the charwoman.

"It beats conjuring, don't it?" said the Professor, interrupting my reflections, and unconsciously echoing the thoughts that were passing through my own mind. So struck was I with the solitude, never having been led to make Sunday expeditions into the city before, that I began to think my guide was distorting the actual truth when he promised to show me a sight which—I quote his own words—"If it were a Rummun there would be a Cook's excursion to see it. Ha! me. Most of us either don't see what 's under our very noses, or don't think it 's worth lookin' at." After walking for a quarter of an hour we turned smartly up a narrow street of an unwholesome character, and in a minute reached a railway arch, beneath which a young man with a clarionet under his arm was holding forth to a small congregation of two ladies, a harmonium, and three little boys. A minute more and we were in the thick of a moving mass of humanity of the most varied description. There must have been thousands of people in that narrow thoroughfare. The sides

of the streets were occupied by shops where birds, dogs, cats, pigeons, fowls, guinea-pigs, mice, rats, goats, rabbits, and fish, were on sale at the lowest market rates. If the quantity and quality of the live stock was remarkable, the number of articles which was necessary for the comfort of their daily life was nothing short of staggering, especially in the bird line. Cages for birds, fountains for birds, nests for birds, seeds for birds, baths for birds, musical instruments for birds, paste for birds, nets for birds, traps for birds—the catalogue is endless. Never before had I realized what an interest could be taken in birds until I made one of this seething congregation, each and all being bent on birds. Nearly every one was carrying a bird. The bird was more often than not in a cage; sometimes it was in the hand. Generally the bird was a linnet, and generally the linnet was hidden from view by a handkerchief of blue, with white bird's-eyes sprinkled over it. No one was in the least bit shy. If you had a bird, it was understood as a matter of course that you were willing to dispose of it. If you had no bird, it was taken for granted that you required one. In order to allow me to see how business was transacted, the Professor said to a Jew boy who was as ragged as Belisarius down to his boots, which were of patent-leather, and shone with a magnificent polish:



"How much for the bird?"

"Two bob, guv'nor."

"*Two bob!* Go 'long."

"Well, how much?"

"How much do you want?"

"What 'll you give?"

"What 'll you take?"

"Well, see here. I want to buy a new suit. I 'll take one and a tanner."

"Give you one."

"Why, he cost me more than that for grub alone."

The Professor made a sign of moving on, when the boy, following, said mysteriously:

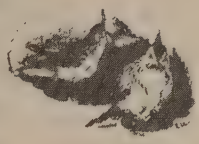
"Come round the corner. I 'll 'ang it up, and you can hear 'im sing."

"I don't care whether he sings or not. I wants it to sell again," replied the Professor. And the boy went off in a tumultuous passion.

We went along with the crowd, declining many delicacies which were offered to us. Amongst them were ice-creams, Italian pastry, hot coffee, Irish stew, and a succulent-looking yellow jelly, in which were imbedded sections of eels. The Professor, doing the honors, remarked that it would be possible for a naked, starving man to enter the crowd at one end and come out at the other with a new suit of clothes, a bird's-eye handkerchief, a pair of patent-leather boots, a hat, a gold watch and chain, and a ring on every finger. In the same journey the starving man might consume a good meal, quench his thirst, consult the doctor about his corns or his cough, furnish an aviary, an aquarium, and a kennel, and drive out at the other end in a carriage drawn by a pair of goats, and be in time to attend the prayer-meeting under the railway bridge.

Presently we found ourselves in a narrow by-way composed of dirty houses which had seen much better days. "There 's Chaffinch's," said the Professor, pointing to a sign which was swinging to and fro in the wind. As we got a little nearer I saw that on the board were painted a number of dogs of various breeds, apparently discussing some very important question of state. "And there 's Chaffinch!" exclaimed the Professor, quickening his step.

All that I could see was a thick cloud of smoke, and it was only when we reached our destination that I was able to distinguish the homely features of the bird- and dog-fancier, who had enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke which would have done credit to a hundred-ton gun. Mr. Chaffinch wore a fur cap, a pair of trousers, a flannel shirt, and disdained neckcloths, braces, and coat. This being Sunday, he explained, he took a rest, and when he took a rest he liked to feel loose, which the Professor and I agreed was a most admirable condition to find one's self in. After some friendly greetings had passed between the Professor and Chaffinch, we passed, not without difficulty, through an archway of bird-cages, into the shop, which could not be seen for more bird-cages. There was a row of chairs, but each chair was occupied by a dog, and as each dog seemed to be of a ferocious character, I declined to accept Mr. Chaffinch's kind invitation to take "a cheer." We could scarcely hear ourselves speak, so great was the noise. The birds were singing, and fluttering their wings; the parrots on the counter were chattering; the dogs were barking; and three or four cats were mewing. The atmosphere was dreadful, but to the Chaffinch family it seemed to be as fresh as the balmiest breeze that sweeps the Mediterranean.



Dog- and bird-fanciers are a suspicious race—a taciturn and morose race—whose favorite language seems to be winks and nods, but Chaffinch was in a most genial mood. He gave me to understand that it was only on Sundays that he was really himself, and only because it was his inviolable rule to let himself go on the Sabbath, not being braced up, and feeling loose, and consequently Chaffinch was seen at his best. He then showed us the cage in which Peter had been a prisoner, and consented, as a great favor, to take me to his parlor. We mounted a break-neck set of stairs, which twisted and turned until they led you into a low little room, in which a great fire was blazing, and the heat of which reminded one of the tropics, except for the strong odor of fried onions, which is not usually associated with tropical latitudes. Mr. Chaffinch's parlor resembled a miniature menagerie more than anything I can think of. Four monkeys were sitting on the hearth wrapped up in some portions of a lady's clothing—I should say petticoats—and shivering even with such protection; a fine Persian cat was fast asleep on Chaffinch's rocking-chair, which he called his reserved seat; three parrots were exercising their lungs and their limbs in their cages; a row of canaries in cages occupied the window-sill, and on a chest of drawers in the corner were some white rats and a few goldfishes swimming in a pickle-bottle. In the centre of the room was a square table without a cover, over which an old man of sixty was standing. He was slicing up a huge dark-looking piece of meat, and wielded a sharp blade with wonderful dexterity, dividing the slices with amazing equality, putting down the knife every minute, and slipping the slices on to a wooden skewer. "That 's 'im: Mr. Katzmit, PUSSY BUTCHER to the Rile Family and aristocracy," whispered Mr. Chaffinch, pointing respectfully to the old man. "Yes, him as found your cat. A won-

derful old feller. Don't mind if he don't notice you. He 's a bit proud since he became a Rile tradesman and mixed with the nobility. Ha! he knows a lot about cats, he does. And that 's Miss Tew. How are you this mornin'? and how 's the little uns?—a bit queer here," whispered Mr. Chaffinch, touching his forehead. The subject of these salutations was a weazen-faced little creature, who looked fifty, but might have been thirty, or might have been sixty, with a melancholy visage. "Much as usual, Chaffinch, thank you. As well as usual, but they do tickle, oh! they do tickle. How would you like to go through the world always being tickled and never laughing, never laughing?" exclaimed Miss Tew, addressing herself to me. I felt sorry enough for poor Miss Tew, as one does for any member of the human race who is mentally afflicted. Miss Tew must have read my thoughts, for she said at once: "Ah! you think I 'm queer, don't you? They all think so. But they 're all wrong. You 'd feel queer if you had to turn to white mice for a living, when they tickle so!"

Turning over this stiff problem in my mind, and still uncertain of my ground, and being unwilling to hurt poor Miss Tew's feelings, I ventured to ask her if she would allow me to see her white mice. "With pleasure, sir. My terms—a halfpenny a peep, and a penny a show. For private performances given to families in their own homes I generally get sixpence." "Allow me to consider this as a private show, Miss Tew," said I, folding sixpence in a bit of paper and putting it down gently before her, like one does a doctor's fee. She put the sixpence in her pocket, and produced from the corner a box painted like

one of the toy theatres one sees in the Lowther Arcade. She put the box on the table, and drawing up a green baize cloth which hid the front, disclosed to my view a model of a red brick house with a front garden and handsome door, fitted with a brass knocker and a door-plate. There was a drawing-room on the left of the front door, and I took the three upper windows of this two-storied dwelling to be bedrooms. What puzzled me, however, was a set of steps which led up to the windows of the second floor, communicating with each other by a veranda. The whole of this curious house was closed in with glass. Miss Tew went to the back door, and in a second or two half-a-dozen white mice scampered out of the front door; one appeared at the dining-room window, and another was running about the drawing-room. The other six, disregarding all ceremony, and not even looking at the ears of corn which were scattered about the front garden, tripped up the steps, raced across the veranda, and disappeared into the bedrooms. Two I never saw again; two came down stairs and emerged from the front door, going out of the garden gate, and apparently went out for a walk; whilst two others, to my astonishment, were peeping out of the chimneys up aloft. I was greatly amused by the antics of the little mice, and thought my sixpence had been well spent. "No, sir; there 's more to come yet," said Miss Tew, emerging from the back regions, and looking more melancholy than ever. "You must have your sixpenny worth. What do you say to a little game of hide-and-seek?" Nothing that Miss Tew could say or do would astonish me, so I bowed and kept my eye upon her. "Oh! how they do tickle," she exclaimed, shivering

and shaking in spite of the heat. "Oh! how they do—they 're hidden now," and this extraordinary woman showed me a white mouse with a blue ribbon round his neck. "This is Stanley, sir, he 's goin' to find Emin and five others. Ugh—tickling again!" Miss Tew then put little Stanley in the palm of her hand, and the tiny explorer disappeared up her sleeve, and all was still. Miss Tew's face was convulsed with spasms for the space of three minutes, the space of time she gave Stanley to find Emin and his five companions. "How they do tickle, tickle, tickle! Come, Emin; now, Stanley," she kept crying, and ten seconds short of the three minutes allotted for the search, Stanley, Emin, and five little explorers emerged from the other sleeve of Miss Tew's other arm, and the performance was over.

CHAPTER XIV.

The purveyor of cats' meat to the Royal Family. How he "loored" Peter away from the bosom of his family. Mr. Chaffinch on coincidences, followed by Mr. Chaffinch's story of the parrot which appealed to the Archbishop, and was the means of restoring a missing husband to his wife and family.

I NOW turned to Mr. Katzmit, for such, oddly enough, was the name of the Pussy Butcher to the Royal Family, and asked him to tell me how he found Peter. "The smell of the meat loored him, sir. They can't struggle agen it. It 's *Rile* me-it, guv'nor. Cats is not the only uns it loors. Not the only uns." A sort of grim smile played about his rugged features, as he looked at Mr. Chaffinch in a curious way, which I interpreted as meaning that Mr. Katzmit was not above "looring 'em" on for his own ends. However, Peter was at home again, and I pressed him no further, being sufficiently rewarded for my anxiety by the glimpses of queer life which my search had afforded me. "Mr. Katzmit, will you tell me how you got your position as purveyor to the Court?" "I had a brother, sir, as was a Rile sweep, and swep the Rile chimbleys, and a sister as was a Rile landry, and 'ung up the Rile linin, and a cousin as cleaned the Rile winders—the fam'ly

'as been connected with Rilty as long as I can remember." Whether Mr. Katzmit was speaking the truth or not I cannot say. He may be claiming honors that belong to others. I *can* say, however, that his cart bears the Royal Arms. The subject was then changed by Mr. Chaffinch, and drifted into a discussion on the bird and dog business. "Dog-dealers and bird-dealers," said the old man, "has the reputation of bein' a 'ard-'arted, close-fisted lot. They 're as they 're made, I says, and I 've roominated on this 'ere point every Sunday mornin' as long as I can remember. If a dog-dealer or a bird-dealer tries to be on the square he don't look his part. There 's somethink in his eye that is n't in other folks' eyes, and the public don't expect him to be on the square. And however square you may be, you gets no credit for it. You might as well be round, and round is just what a good many of us is, though there is exceptions." I was glad to notice a blush mantling over Mr. Chaffinch's features. "We can't go straight to the pint in sellin' of a dog, or buyin' of a dog. You go backin' here, and sidin' there, and in and out just where you sees a openin'. But you 're mistaken, sir, if you think we ain't got our feelinx like other folks, the very worst on us. Do you b'lieve in them things they call 'em in the paper, kindsences—things with long arms, like railway signals they must be—as is allus poppin' down in front of us, the very things we least expected, and yet looked for." "It was a kincidens this guv'nor a-seein' 'is precious cat prayin' at our winder?" remarked the Professor. "Exackly," said Mr. Chaffinch, approvingly. "You 've just hit it. One of those things if you read in a book they 'd say it was med up. Well now, I 'll jest tell you another kincidens which happened in my old shop in the West India Dock Road. Shall I?" We all said "Yes," and Mr. Chaffinch proceeded as follows:

"One Monday I received a letter on paper with a black stripe round it as thick as my finger. The writer asked me to call at No. ——, in a quiet street in the N. W. district. The writer said that she had a parrot that talked, for sale. She had heard of my name as being a fair dealer, and would be glad to sell it to me. When I reached the house I saw at once that the furniture was going to be sold as well as the parrot. The walls was covered with bills, the front door was open, and the auctioneer's men a-goin' in and out, smokin' their pipes quite free and easy. I pushed my way through the crowd, and was looking round, when a little servant-gal comes up to me with one of my cards in her hands, and asked if I was Mr. Chaffinch—'The old original,' she added, doubtfully, reading from my business card. 'The old original I am,' I replies. 'You looks it,' says she. 'Foller me, please.' Half-way down the stairs she stopped me. 'What are yer goin' to give for that parrot? Oh! it 's a won'erful talker. Talk better than me, and I 've passed the Sixth Standard, I have.' 'Well, I must see it first, you know, Missy,' says I. We reached the bottom of the steps and the door of the front kitchen, when the little girl said: 'Be careful, Mr. Chaffinch, what you say. They 're in an orful way. Sold up for rent. Master 's dead, drownded, and no friends. You 'll do the best you can, won't you, Mr. Chaffinch?' 'Yes, little Missy,' says I. A little lady with her veil down, and two young ladies, darters, were in the front kitchen, and looked hard at me as I came in. 'Are you Mr. Chaffinch?' 'I am, ladies.' 'Mr. Chaffinch,' said the mother, looking me full in the face, 'we want to know if you 'll buy that parrot.—Polly,' speaking to the bird, 'Hurrah for the Queen!' 'And the Royal Family, Polly?' 'Three cheers for the Prince of Wales.' 'What did the judge say?' 'Five shillings and costs,' replied the parrot. And then she

broke down. 'There—take him away, dears, take him away,' and the lady sank down on the kitchen-chair in a dead faint. Her girls were crying, poor things, for the parrot was all they had except a portmanty a-piece. I made them an offer, which they took. It was more than the bird was worth, though I made a handsome profit out of it afterwards, as you will hear. I was glad to get away, for I never felt more like crying myself when I saw the two darters say good-bye to the bird, as they covered it up. The bird was as hard as flint, and did n't mind a bit. The little servant came upstairs with me, and when we got to the top she said, 'Mr. Chaffinch, they didn't tell you all.' 'Lor! what do you mean, Missy? It ain't a sell, is it?' 'A sell? Not a bit of it!' indignantly. 'Take the cover off, and I 'll show yer,' replied Missy, 'Polly, Polly. Swear, Polly.' I tell you it quite staggered me to hear that innocent-looking little girl go on like that. 'For shame; for shame,' says the bird, which took my breath for a moment. 'I 'll tell Canterbury. Ha, ha, ha!' 'A good bird that, Missy,' I said to the little servant. 'Ain't that worth another sovereign, Mr. Chaffinch?' she asks, looking up at me so knowing. 'Now that you say it, Missy, I believe it is,' says I, and I did give her another. 'Mr. Chaffinch, you 're a angel,' says she. 'You 'll have a pair of wings when you die. You 're a real angel.' 'Thank you, Missy. Wings *is* in my way, but ——' 'You may give me a kiss, Mr. Chaffinch,' and I did, and went away, feelin' desperate sorry for the poor

things. I took the bird off saying 'I 'll tell the parson. Kiss Polly. Ha, ha, ha!'

"Them as gets a livin' by dogs and birds 'ain't time for sentiment, and I soon forgot all about 'em. The parrot I hung in the sun outside the shop, and he enj'yed his life, carrying on awful sometimes. He was a wonderful talker. He used to sleep in my room; and when we went to bed, he would say, 'Put the light out.' I taught him other scraps, and, getting rather to admire his abilities, refused several offers. One day Poll was sunning himself outside the shop when I saw a sunburnt, seafaring man looking hard at Polly. After waiting for a minute as if he was thinking hard, he came into my shop and said to me—I was mendin' a dog-collar—'I say, my man, where did you get that parrot from?' 'Fair words and good money,' says I, thinking it was his roundabout way of hinting that I had stole it. 'He 's very like—very like; let me look at the bird, will you?' I saw no reason for refusing him, got the bird down, and put it on the counter. 'Swear, Polly,' said he, quite serious, and when I heard him say those very words I knew something was up, and I listened to what the bird would do. 'For shame. I 'll tell Canterbury.' 'Why, that 's our parrot!' shouted he, and then he came all over flushed. I thought he was going to be bad, but he was only a little excited. At last he said he 'd give me a fi'p'un' note if I 'd tell him how the bird came into my possession. I told him I must know why he wished for this information. 'Quite right, my man; quite right. I bought that bird for my wife and daughters three years ago on the West Coast of Africa, and taught it to talk. I taught it those words by which I knew it was my old bird. Have you read this in the papers?' and he took out of his pocket-book a newspaper slip which described the sufferings of the crew of a ship that went down with all hands

—from Newcastle to Valparaiso. 'I was the skipper of that ship,' said the sunburnt man. 'I was picked up by a vessel bound south, and after twelve months have just landed. Now, will you tell me when you got the bird? I've hunted for my wife and daughters high and low. London has swallowed them up,' he said, shaking all over like jelly. 'What 'll you give me if I tell you?' says I. The captain hesitated. 'Well,' says I, 'I 'll do it for nothink, and doin' things for nothink is not business, you know. Come along with me.' And in half an hour the captain was restored to his widow, what was n't a widow arter all, and seemed gladder to see him than ever my old woman was when I came back arter a journey."

"But how did you know, Mr. Chaffinch, where the widow had gone to?"

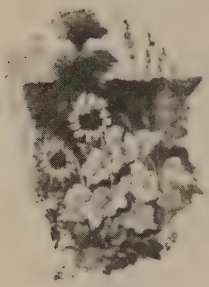
"How did I know? Why, that little brick of a servant-girl used to come of a Sunday to inquire after Poll. When she grows up I 'm blowed if little Missy sha'n't be Mrs. Chaffinch No. 2."

CHAPTER XV.

Showing how Peter paid his addresses to Miss Badroulbadour, a certain Persian cat. The course of true love runs as usual. A scratch in time saves nine. Pleasures of the country. Peter and the bees.

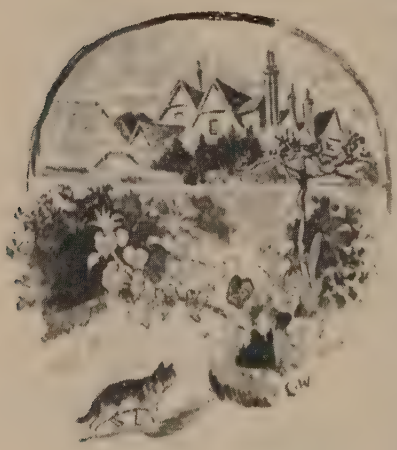
PETER, although he was much attached to town, did not despise an occasional visit to a country house in the heat of summer. He certainly took his town airs with him, but after he had shaken himself down he dropped as easily into rustic ways as Mr. Silas Wegg dropped into poetry. Having seen much of the world, this supple animal had learnt to accommodate himself to the humors of any society, and never failed to make himself agreeable to any circle in which he happened to find himself. The sociable side of Peter's character came out strongly when he met any lady cats on these little excursions into the country. In this very house in which you will kindly imagine that we are now living, Peter was on most affectionate terms with a lovely young Persian cat called Bad, which is short for Badroulbadour (Mrs.

Aladdin, you may remember). Badroulbadour, although born and bred in the country, had all the female arts at her command. She had but to whisk her tail to attract a score of lovers, and her eyes were capable of expressing a thousand passions. She was beautiful, and as is the way of beauties, she was, alas! capricious. Peter was a new arrival; his travelling-basket was luxurious; his collar was made by the most fashionable man in town; Peter brought the latest tittle-tattle from the metropolis; Peter was *blasé;* Peter—to sum up his accomplishments—was *fin-de-siècle.* It was enough; Badroulbadour set her cap at him, and, I blush to say it, Peter, veteran though he was in affairs of the heart, fell a victim to the wiles of this too fascinating Persian puss. *Vanitas vanitatum!* He made the usual mistake if I read his thoughts aright. "Baddy has fallen in love with me. Poor Baddy. A dear little puss. So gentle; so modest; so shy. Ah! Peter, these country cats for my money. As for those town beauties—pooh, pooh! too knowing, too cynical—Pooh! emancipated, I say: POOH! At last I have found a heart that beats in response to my poor battered organ. I might do worse. *She* might do worse. A Persian too. Well-bred. And if she dies before me—well, really one does n't like thinking of these things—her skin would fetch something handsome, I dare say. Shades of Cleopatra, Patroness of Cats. I 'll propose." So I interpreted Peter's thoughts at this crisis. I am sorry to say



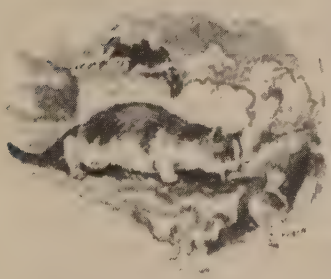
that Peter was badly used by Miss Badroulbadour. One afternoon she was sleeping in his basket, and he tried to evict her. In the little difference of opinion that ensued Badroulbadour not only showed her claws but used them, and poor Peter's right eye was sadly wounded, and his nose bled profusely. This ended all further relations between them. "What could I do?" mewed Peter afterwards. "Whitechapel in Arcadia, no—you can't scratch a lady. Usurp her prerogative! Never. No. A scratch in time saves nine." I have related this little episode in order to show that Peter was a cat who was able to reconcile himself to the inevitable.

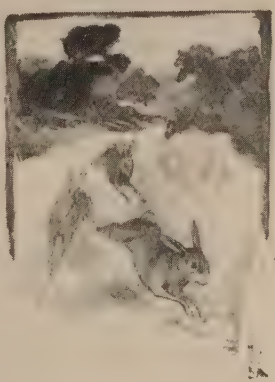
It was most amusing to see how politely and with what *savoir faire* he met the advances of the other cats in the house; and to note how readily he interested himself in their small world: in such matters, for instance, as the number of mice there was likely to be in the hay-rick; or the quality of the milk which was supplied from the dairy; or the amount of the dainties that fell from the table; or the prospective visits of the butcher to the piggery or the fowl-house. Gradually, the quiet mode of living, the serene atmosphere of the house, the sunny garden, the flower-scented air, the country sounds, the freedom from distracting influences, and the early hours, began to exercise their influence upon Peter, and his enjoyment of country life was unaffected. He had ample time for reflection as he lay in his favorite nook by the venerable sun-dial which occupied the centre of a lawn as yet undesecrated by lawn-tennis.



The small excitements of our daily life became pleasures to which he looked forward with increasing zest. Peter roamed amongst the flowers, and he loved to watch the swans as they sailed down the little river which ran past

the end of the garden. He watched the pigeons; he gazed with envy at the cattle as they stood knee-deep in the water or took a siesta in the hot noontide; and he carried his enthusiasm for the country so far that he became a vegetarian and consumed vast quantities of beet root, potatoes, and carrots. After the sun had set, and the silence was only broken by the night-cries of the birds flying home to roost, or the cawing of the rooks as they said their evening prayers, he walked out and watched the hares





come racing down the lane. And sometimes when the moon was up he listened to the owl preaching wisdom from his tower. Such were his simple pleasures.

If Peter met with a mishap now and then it was only to be expected. What can the wisest cat know of bees? One day Peter, ever thirsting for knowledge, upset a light hive and was stung. He bore the pain with scarce a wince, and walked away with Spartan fortitude, merely remarking in a mew or two—"'T is ever the first step that costs. Without an occasional sting where would be the zest of living?" Peter the Philosopher! It was in the same philosophical spirit, too, that he met the advances of an angry duck which bit his tail.

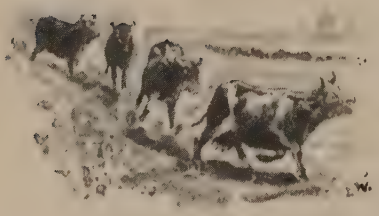
The only enemies Peter had was a pack of fox-hounds of whom he was in some terror. One day Peter was lost. We searched in a hundred likely places, but he could not be found. At last we came to the terrible conclusion that he had been devoured by the dogs. I visited the kennels, but failed to see any undue protuberance in the animals which would lead me to suppose that Peter had shared the fate of Jonah, and I went to bed with a sorrowful heart. I had just blown my candle out when a loud knock summoned me to the door,

and I was informed that Peter had been discovered coiled up at the bottom of my host's bed, where he had slept away the day in peace whilst his master had been distraught. After racking my brains to find a reason for Peter's vagary I came to the conclusion that he had hidden himself in a fit of jealousy. He had seen me petting Badroulbadour after breakfast, and had revenged the affront by giving me a day's anxiety. Or was it merely the influence of Morpheus and a featherbed?

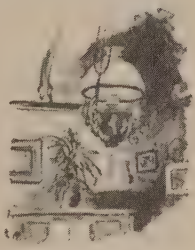
CHAPTER XVI.

London after a visit to the country. Peter is glad to get back to town, but turns up his nose at the Cockney sun. Reflections on London roofs. Peter goes to his club, and the chapter necessarily closes.

At the first sign of winter Peter and I packed up our traps and left the country with many a sigh. Peter was stowed away in his basket, from which I released him after the train had steamed out of the station. He nestled up beside me in the corner of our compartment, occasionally looking out of the window, until he was startled back to his seclusion by a regiment of monsters racing along, as it seemed to Peter, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. The giants were trees, but his lively young imagination endued them with life, and they seemed to peer in at him through the window, with threatening glances, and arms open as if to catch him in their embrace. When we reached home, which looked uncomfortable enough after our long absence, Peter seemed a little depressed by the dust and untidiness of our rooms, but he recovered his spirits when he heard the cheerful cry of "Mee-it" in the street, and the sound of the melodious muffin-bell. After dinner he showed his satisfaction by rubbing against me many times, and purring gently,



as much as to say: "Ah! my dear master. There 's no place like London after all. What do you think?" "Well, Peter," I replied, "I think absence makes the heart grow fonder. Our banishment has whetted our appetites for the delights of the metropolis. In fact, the change has done us good." But several days elapsed before Peter recovered his town legs. It may have been affectation. Peter, have I not said, was almost human, and I thought I noticed a certain rusticity about his ways, a sort of contempt for town milk, a sardonic grin as he smelt the humble little plants in the flower-boxes, and a turning up of his little nose at the Cockney sun.



Those who have not thought about such matters will naturally wonder what the pleasures of a town cat may be. Well, a Cockney cat has his pleasures, just as a Cockney man has. I use the word Cockney in its best sense, implying a real Londoner. A roof is to a cat as a club is to a man. At least my observations have honestly led me to that conclusion. Both offer an agreeable rendezvous when a little society is needed. A finer view of roofs than is commanded by one of my windows I defy you to find if you search all London over. Imagine a thick forest

of chimneys, with an impenetrable undergrowth of tangled water pipes, gas pipes, telephone wires, and telegraph wires, twining and twisting round every object they touch, like the parasites of a real tropical forest. To me this vista possessed all the fascinations of the picturesque. It amused me, too, to play the part of Asmodeus, and I conjured up feasts out of the smoke which curled from the hundred and one chimneys; and drew many fanciful pictures of the fireside from which each wreath of smoke proceeded. This, then, was Peter's club, which was also frequented by some very aristocratic members of catdom, for my modest apartments overlooked the tops of a very aristocratic quarter of the town, and when I saw the cats stalking a sparrow, or engaged in an argument, or taking the sun, I knew they were owned by Duchesses and Peeresses, or the ladies of Baronets at the very least. I am only human, so you may be sure that I was too pleased to allow Peter to meet such polite company.

I have compared roofland to a tropical forest, but I should ask you to imagine a forest clothing a number of broken slopes, such a higgledy-piggledy collection of roofs was it. This roofland also offered to the cats a series of narrow ridges and dizzy precipices, which also made it a veritable Alpine hunting-ground. I venture to think that such a combination of attractions is to be found in no other capital. I have perforce contemplated the view in many a long vigil from sundown to sunrise. I have heard enthusiasts rave about the glories of sunrise when seen from some lofty peak, or expatiate upon the gaudy glories of a tropical sunset. I can see effects as admirable without moving from my window. Give me then a Cockney sunrise and a Cockney sunset as the supreme effects of Nature.

I was jotting down these reflections when Peter jumped clean out of my arms, and soon disappeared round the base of a neighboring chimney. I, too, put my hat on, dropped my latch-key in my pocket, and sauntered down to my club to hear the news of the town.

CHAPTER XVII.

A few words on gratitude. Peter always a grateful animal. Shows also how he objected to kittens.

SOME people say that cats are selfish creatures, which are incapable of affection; wretches who accept benefits

one day and forget them the next; ingrates whose love of self is their only passion. One day it happened that I was having a discussion with a bonesetter respecting gratitude. He had a black eye, and I asked him whence it came. He told me. A prize-fighter came to him one day, blubbering like a child, and begged him to put his thumb into position again. The prize-fighter had pushed the thumb out against some portion of the Brixton Bully Boy's frame; the Bully Boy had beaten him; he had been in his bed for three weeks, and not a friend came near him. "Boo, boo, boo!" would the bonesetter restore his thumb to its proper position, and thus place him on a war footing? The bonesetter placed the pugilist on a chair, and began to ply his thumb. Overcome with rage

at the pain the good-natured bonesetter was inflicting upon him, the pugilist felled him to the ground with his other fist in a moment of inconsiderate emotion. Tableau! "You may argue till you are black in the face, but most people have no more gratitude in their composition than your cat there," said the bonesetter, pointing to poor Peter. I admitted the individual ingratitude, but I denied the sweeping generalization, especially the comparison, and took up the cudgels on behalf of maligned Peter, who was thus having his nose put out of joint by one whose business was putting joints in. On the contrary, I have always found Peter most grateful for any little kindnesses. Nor did he ever forget me, even if I left him for half a year. He never failed to greet me on my return home, and if I did not notice him, he would jump on my shoulder and try in every possible manner to attract my attention. This was a touching trait in his character.

As he grew older, he became more staid and dignified; familiarities were disagreeable to him, and practical jokes he abhorred as much as Dr. Johnson disliked a pun. I was able to read Peter's face easily; it was expressive as an actor's. One day we put down beside him, whilst he was lying as usual on the hearth-rug, four fluffy white kittens. They were only ten days old, and nearly blind. One of them climbed over him, then another, until the four had settled quietly for a square meal. For a few moments Peter was in doubt, and then suddenly seemed to be aware of their intentions. Suddenly he raised himself, giving each kitten a small pat with his paw, and, looking ever so disgusted and contemptuous, though very dignified, he walked away. Peter is still as curious as a woman. He never leaves a parcel until it is undone, and he also finds out all the new things that come into the

house. I have known him make the most extraordinary struggles to inspect a new vase. For days he would worry himself and all of us until he was allowed to smell it. Then he was content, and never noticed the vase again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Peter goes to a hotel, and pays his ten shillings a day. He flirts with the chambermaids, and makes journeys in the elevator. The alarm of fire. Peter in disgrace, and Peter's liver.

To a person of a domestic turn of mind I suppose a hotel is as uncomfortable a residence as it is possible to find. The gilt and the glass which are scattered about in such profusion possibly appeal to those who are satisfied with gay exteriors, and are wise enough to seek no farther; the hurrying guests afford a pleasant excitement by stimulating curiosity; the sumptuous settees and the gaudy decorations pass for luxury; the marble columns are certainly palatial. Palatial, too, is the politeness, though it is discounted by the hungry eyes which follow you so closely that it is impossible to forget that it is an additional item in the little bill which comes to you as certainly as the grave. Holding these opinions, I was sorry enough when it became necessary for Peter and myself to take up our quarters at one of these palaces. A cat must have a home and a fireside, and in no place is a cat so much out of place as in a hotel. When I spoke to the manager respecting Peter, he said with a polite smirk that Peter was welcome, but he would be charged at the rate of ten shillings a day. I smirked in my turn, and accepted the terms. I became No. 111, and Peter was sent into the kitchen. He who would meet with adventures must be adventurous. Peter was

adventurous. He came to see me every day, and rode up in the elevator, enjoying his journeys immensely. In the mornings he would flirt with the chambermaids (in a decorous manner), and those high-spirited young women tossed him in the sheets, smothered him in the pillow-cases, and played many tricks with the responsive Peter. One day they forgot him, and he was lost in the wilderness of bedchambers. We searched everywhere, but in vain. In the middle of the night our floor was alarmed by a loud ringing of bells and a succession of shrieks. I opened my door with the rest, thinking the place was on

fire. The passage was a long vista of night-dresses and candles, which presented a very ghostly sight. When a gigantic fireman appeared, with a water-bucket, the ghostly forms all disappeared in an excess of modesty, appearing again after the fireman had reached the room from which the screams were still issuing. "What 's the matter?" bawled the guardian of the night. "Booooooo." "Open the door, please." "You can 't come in. I 'm—booo——" Bang, bang, bang! against the door. "Booooooo." "What *is* the matter?" "A burglar in my room." "Where?" "Under the bed." The door

opened, the fireman entered, and emerged in a minute, holding poor Peter by the scruff of his neck. I snatched him from the rude embrace of the fireman, and, offering a general apology to the scowling guests, who beat a retreat, Peter and I went to bed. The next day we received warning from the authorities, but I pleaded that it was a first offence, and we were allowed to remain. A day or two afterwards Peter was lost again, but luckily I found him without a general alarm. He was snugly coiled up in the bed of 112. A third time he disappeared, and gave me an exciting chase. You have probably never been in the left-property room of a large hotel. It contains a more miscellaneous collection of objects than any auction-room in London: sticks, umbrellas, trunks as big as a house, and tiny trunks, portmanteaus in every condition, most of which, to judge from the labels, which hide every inch of the original leather, have sailed over every sea on the face of the globe, and visited every hotel on dry land. Boxes are piled up to the ceiling; there are sea-chests bearing names on their sides which suggest tropical shores, burning sands, and snake-haunted forests. There are boxes in which you might have packed a body comfortably with room to spare; bandboxes, bonnet-boxes, dress-boxes, every sort of box that ever was constructed by carpenter. And—yes—there is actually a coffin propped up in a remote corner, and almost hidden behind a heap of packing-cases. Picture, too, clothing enough to fit out a small army, if the army did not stand on ceremony, and was content with odd stockings, odd shoes, odd waistcoats, odd coats, odd hats, and odd gloves. In this chamber of the forgotten and forsaken we discovered my missing puss, coiled up in a lidless trunk, with a child's frock for a bed.

It is natural enough that there should be a great deal of over-eating and over-drinking in a hotel. Visitors who

are there for pleasure defy the demon dyspepsia, and make a point of taking everything, with a determination to have the fullest value for their money. If there is pampering up-stairs, there is pampering down-stairs, and I soon discovered that Peter, too, must be eating quite ten shillings' worth of food in the day. I first noticed it when Peter declined to kill a mouse which paid me nocturnal visits. Gluttony is one of the deadliest of sins, and I was sorrowful, indeed, to notice that Peter's cheeks were blown, and his back refused to curve at its proper angle. There was a jaundiced color in his eyes, and Peter had developed a liver! This was the final straw. I paid the bill and departed.

CHAPTER XIX.

Peter, indulging too freely in the pleasures of the table, is taken to see the doctor. The strange crowd at the doctor's door. The poor little girl, and the cat that lived upon mice.

PETER, as I hope I have indicated in the course of these memoirs, was in many little ways little less than human; and in saying this I intend a compliment to catdom. It follows naturally that Peter sometimes ate more than was good for him, as was mentioned in the preceding chapter. But does it not go without saying? Peter was *fin-de-siècle*, and lived in an age of luxury and dinners at—well—say five guineas a head. Sir Wilfrid Lawson and his friends (it sounds impertinent to call them ardent spirits) will be pleased to hear that Peter preferred pure water to the finest wine, and there is little doubt that this habitual temperance has enabled him to reach his present advanced age. Some people—there is no lack of scoffers—may say that this is little to his credit, and argue that when there is no temptation there is no virtue. This argument does not hold good in the case of Peter, for I have known him decline sips of brandy when a stimulant would have been most beneficial. It is, moreover, a mistake to think that

cats are teetotalers by disposition. It is merely a matter of environment. Peter undoubtedly yielded himself up to the pleasures of the table at more than one period of his life. Only a year or two ago (long after our visit to the hotel) he was the guest of a rich gentleman named Dives, whose dinners were famous, and whose *chef* received the salary of an under-secretary of state. I beg leave to say (*en parenthèse*) that he earned it as honestly as any of those gentlemen. It is not good for a cat who has been brought up in a plain family to live in the halls of such men as Dives. And why not? The answer is simple. Not only are the actual leavings richer, but the cockroaches grow fatter, the mice become more tender, and the very flies, which have access to a long succession of the richest dishes, become at once apoplectic and appetizing. Your cat, then, not only eats the most savory leavings, but actually devours the very flies, mice, and cockroaches, which are themselves suffering from all the woes of over-indulgence. You will easily guess, then, that Peter soon began to suffer a very martyrdom from indigestion. Melancholia, ill-temper, and all the imps which follow in the train of the demon dyspepsia seemed to have taken possession of him. His nerves were shattered; he started at the mere mention of mouse; the flutter of a sparrow's wings sent a tremor through his frame; the very sight of a roof presented to his morbid imagination a vision of himself in a thousand fragments. I scarcely dared to leave him alone, for I was terrified lest he should put an end to his existence. To make matters worse, he took cold, his ears ached, and Peter Felix became Peter Dolorosus.

At last I summoned up courage and took him to see the doctor. A strange sight met my eyes when we

arrived at his house. The surgery door was besieged by a crowd of horses, dogs, and cats. They were all suffering from some ailment or another, and all were fighting for the next turn. There are few more pathetic sights in this great city, full as it is of tear-compelling spectacles, than the gates of a great hospital where human suffering is alleviated without a fee. There disease fights with disease, and the battle for a little succor is still to the strongest. The woman with a year's life still in her veins pushes aside the woman who has but a month to live without a pang of remorse. It will be her own turn soon to go to the wall. So it was with the little crowd of animals which blocked up the approaches to the door of the doctor, who treated the animals of the poor free of charge. When I saw the too patient sufferings of the animals around us, I felt almost ashamed to look at my pampered Peter, whose pains were but the revolt of an overloaded stomach. The horses and the donkeys were bread-winners. When the bread-winner is in danger, a tragedy may be in the making. In the crush I happened to jostle against a tiny Monad of the streets, whose matted hair hung over her shoulders, whose features were careworn and seared with trouble. She carried in her arms, with a tenderness which surprised me, a cat whose bones almost projected through its skin; the fur had been burnt off in a dozen places; the eyes were bleared with suffering; and the stump, which was all that was left of the tail, told of a hundred nameless cruelties. This miserable couple presented a sight so deplorable that I ventured to speak to the little child.

"Father kicked it," she said, in reply to my question.

"Why?" I asked.

"It stole father's Sunday dinner," replied she, tearfully and fearfully, as if the theft was a terrible offence against society.

"The *whole* of it," I continued ironically, touching the cat's side, which was a fence of bones.

"'T wern't so much to talk of. Two pennorth of meat scraps."

"And *your* dinner?"

"Oh! *we* don't get no dinner. That is only bread and tea."

"How many are there of you?"

"Six, sir. In one room."

"And the cat 's seven. Not much for the cat?"

"Father said we could eat it." And the child stroked

the cat, and showed a strong inclination to cry. The tear was, however, at once called to order.

"Then what does the cat live on?" I continued, puzzled to think why the poor should add to their cares.

"Mice, sir."

"And what do the mice live on?"

"We never knows, sir. Shoes, I think," looking down at her own, a ragged pair, indeed, which cried "clickety clack," and "slippety slop," at every movement.

"And father said if we did n't get a cat we should n't have even a bit of leather left."

I felt very bitter against Peter at this moment, and left him in charge of the doctor, with instructions to dose him with the nastiest compounds to be found in the pharmacopœia. In going out I met my little friend sobbing bitterly.

"What is the matter?" I asked her gently.

"He can't do nothink with her, sir, and said she were to be put out of her misery. I—can't—a-bear—to—do—it," gasped the child.

I lifted the fragment of a shawl, and saw that the cat was already almost at its last breath. "Let me take her from you," I said.

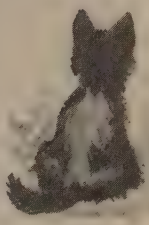
"Will *you* put her out of her misery, sir?" she asked me, without looking up. "And she won't feel it?"

"No. I 'll promise you." And the child dropped the cat into my arms, and ran off fiercely as if for her life.

CHAPTER XX.

Peter in his old age. The frivolous Polly Winkles. The circle in the sitting-room. Peter says his prayers and goes to bed.

And now it only remains for me to draw you a picture of Peter in his old age. Years have rolled by, and Peter has grown older with the rest of us. There are many gray hairs in his coat now; his step is less agile than it was; he is heavy for mouse-hunting now; he sleeps longer, and he is more critical in the quality of his dinner than in days gone by. He is well aware that his adventures are over. No more does he move from house to house; no more does he make expeditions to the country-side. He has done his work, and has now withdrawn from worldly turmoil, conscious of a useful past; prepared to spend a happy old age, and to live out with cheerfulness the few years that may remain to him. "*Carpe diem*," says he, softly. "*Carpe diem*," for to-morrow—who knows that there is a to-morrow for old Peter? "For you, Polly," addressing the lively Miss Winkles, "there is of course an endless vista of to-morrows if you are dissatisfied with to-day." "Ha,



ha!" laughs Miss Winkles, arching her back coyly, accepting the remark as a tribute to her youth and powers of attraction. "Ha, ha! Ha, ha! Ha, ha!" And Miss Winkles sets off in a dizzy and admiring pursuit of her beautiful tail. "Optimistic puss. Ravished by thine own charms!" continues Peter, with a sardonic inflection in his voice which says quite clearly: "And who knows, lovely Miss Winkles, that there is a to-morrow even for thee?"

Peter is indeed the head of a very happy and united family, who defer to him in all things; who soothe him when he is irritable; who give him the tit-bits; who flatter him, and coax him, and wheedle this most susceptible of cats. He does not disturb their equanimity with his philosophical reflections; the fruit of long cogitation and much buffeting with the world, he wisely presents them in the form of soliloquies, which themselves help to feed the harmless fancy he cherishes, that he is himself the epitome of wisdom.

Once more imagine us sitting round the fire as on that wild night when Peter was ushered into the world. The day's work is done; the fire blazes brightly on the clean-swept hearth, throwing shafts of light upon the old oak cabinet and the blue china. A fitful glow falls on my father's ship, which still sails the ocean of canvas and ground glass; and even the idols from the far Pacific lose their uncanniness in the firelight, and look less inscrutable. The faithful Ann has cleared away the tea-things, and the hearth is swept clean. The dull roar of London, which penetrates through the thick red curtains into this quiet little by-way, reminds us in an agreeable way of the fierce struggles of the highways without. It is pleasant to listen to this restless, nameless sound, and to contrast the contention which it suggests with our peaceful circle. Peter occupies the middle of the hearth-rug, and stretches

himself after a long nap; the Persian cat Mahomet sits at Peter's right hand peering into the fire; the tabby, pretty Polly Winkles, to whom I alluded a few minutes ago, is performing her toilette in a leisurely way; Moussa, an obese pug, sits contentedly on the top of a tiny barrel just by my mother's easy-chair. The grandfather's clock in the corner chimes the four quarters and the cuckoo flies out of his nest and cries seven times. "Is the circle inclined to be sportive?" asks my mother, looking round. The circle says "Yes," the violin is tuned, and some one sings:

"Hi! diddle, diddle,
The cat in the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon,
And the little dog laughed to see such sport
And the thief ran away with the spoon."

"Moussa, dear. Moussa, Moussa—come and be dressed," says the stage manager.

Moussa waddles to the wardrobe, and is quickly attired in a gay raiment consisting of a green silk jacket trimmed with a red border, and a hood of green.

Moussa is led forth to the hearth-rug.

Peter, Polly Winkles, and Mahomet make way, lashing their tails, and smiling.

"Roll over, Moussa," goes forth the word of command, and Moussa falls down on his side and rolls over.

"Twice."

A second time Moussa rolls.

"Thrice."

A third time, and obedience is rewarded by a lump of sugar; the sound of quarrying fills the room, and the circle applauds. The barrel is then placed before Moussa, who places his fore-paws upon it and rolls it across the arena, represented by the hearth-rug. Reverse, cross to partners, represented by Peter, Polly Winkles, and Mahomet, and bow to circle. Hoop-la! More sugar. More quarrying. More applause.

A hoop with tissue paper stretched across it is then produced. One of the circle holds the hoop; another of the circle stands behind the hoop, and displays to Moussa's protruding eyes more sugar.

Remonstrance from Moussa:

"Bow, ow, ow, Bow."

He looks at the sugar longingly.

You could as easily mop the sea up as stay Moussa's love of sugar.

Moussa is urged onwards.

C-R-R-A-S-H.

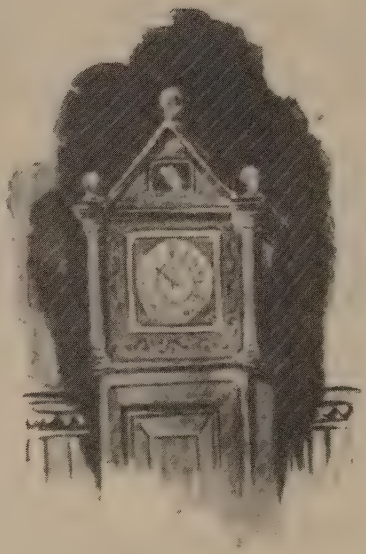
Moussa is through, and the prize is won.

A stranger who happens to be present in the circle this evening offers more sugar to Moussa. Moussa looks at it longingly, and then looks at the circle, which plainly disapproves. Moussa walks away and begins to cry. The stranger is touched by the note of pathos and drops the sugar, which falls exactly under Moussa's nose. Still this virtuous dog resists the temptation, and looks up at the stranger reproachfully, as if to say: "Tempter, avaunt. The narrow path is Moussa's." Virtue is again rewarded, and Moussa is compared to the Roman sentry who declined to leave his post at Pompeii.

"Why, the dog almost speaks!" remarks the stranger, intending a compliment to the animal world. "Sir. If dogs and cats spoke," replied the centre of the circle

sententiously, "they would cease to be such pleasant companions."

With such simple sports as these we whiled away a pleasant hour, and secured a great deal of happiness at the insignificant cost of a few lumps of sugar, thus showing, as my mother always pointed out to us, that pleasure is not a question of pounds.



Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
Cuck-ooo
} said the little bird in the clock.

"Time is on the wing," said my mother, closing her work-basket, and putting up her needles.

"Peter, my dear, it is bedtime."

And Peter walks sedately up to my mother's chair, puts up his paws, and says his prayers.

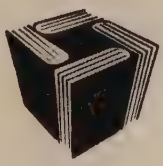
THE END.

Treasure of Books

Under One Roof

Demand Any Rare Book at

www.facsimilepublishers.com



Demand Any Rare Book at:

www.facsimilepublishers.com

if not available, give information,
our team will search and update you.

Promote Knowledge:

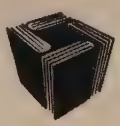
If you have any rare book
which is not available at
www.facsimilepublishers.com,
offer it to other readers so that others can also be
benefitted with your cooperation.
The book will be printed with your courtesy.

Print & Publish:

If you wish to get your book printed or published,
we have the service for you.

Customization on Demand:

We offer customization of books
as per the demand of the customer.



Published by

Facsimile Publisher
Ashok Vihar, Delhi-110052 (India)
Website: www.facsimilepublishers.com

Distributed by

Gyan Books Pvt. Ltd.
5, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002 (India)
E-mail: books@gyanbooks.com, Website: www.gyanbooks.com

8 888000 832935

Facsimile Publisher

12 Pragati Market
Ashok Vihar, Ph-2
Delhi-110052, India
info@facsimilepublishers.com
www.facsimilepublishers.com

US$ 12.00
. 600.00

Distributed By :

GYAN BOOKS PVT. LTD.

5 Ansari Road, Daryaganj
New Delhi-110002
E-mail: books@gyanbooks.com
Web: www.gyanbooks.com
Ph. +91-11-47034999

8 888000 832935